OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro GAMER™

AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO | ATARI | SINCLAIR | NEO GEO | SONY | COIN-OP | MOBILE

30 YEARS OF NES



ALSO INSIDE

TOMB RAIDER | PAUL NORMAN | 005
DINO CRISIS | JURASSIC PARK
ATARI JAGUAR | JORDAN MECHNER

FLASHBACK

PAUL CUISSET ON HIS SCI-FI HIT, ITS DIFFICULT SEQUEL AND HIS EXCITING PLANS FOR CONRAD'S FUTURE

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THE GREATEST EVER GAMES FOR SEGA'S 16-BIT CONSOLE, AS VOTED FOR BY YOU, THE READER

FLIGHT OF THE AMAZON QUEEN

THE TWO BEST FRIENDS WHO TOOK ON LUCASARTS

MASTERTRONIC

THE MEDIA KINGS THAT MADE BUDGET GAMES COOL

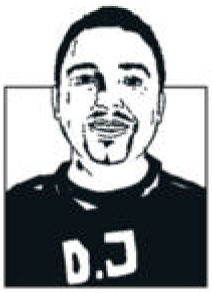
SHOOT TO THRILL

HOW DUCK HUNT AND OTHER CLASSICS EVOLVED THE LIGHTGUN GENRE

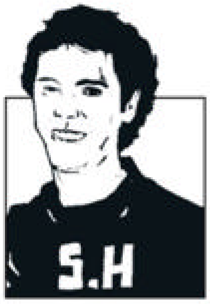
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ISSUE 118


APEX
RAW

THE RETROBATES FAVOURITE LIGHTGUN GAME



DARRAN JONES
Confidential Mission. It's a great take on *Virtua Cop*
Expertise:
Juggling a beautiful wife, two gorgeous girls and an award-winning magazine
Currently playing:
The Last Of Us
Favourite game of all time:
Strider



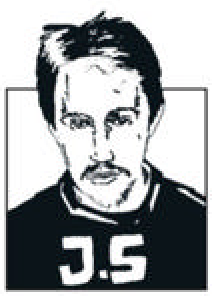
STUART HUNT
Ghost Squad. A great recent blaster from Sega that captures the spirit of its earlier *Virtua Cop* games
Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them. Marketing
Currently playing:
Tomb Raider
Favourite game of all time:
Tomb Raider



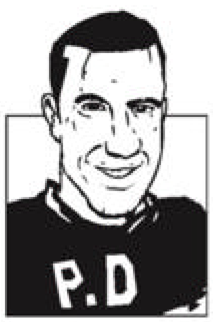
PAUL DRURY
My future wife and I spent our early dates blasting through *The House Of The Dead*. Defeating the Magician together convinced me she was the one
Expertise:
The *Forbidden Forest* Shake
Currently playing:
The Last Of Us
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



JASON KELK
I was never any good at it, but *Rail Chase* with a friend was always ridiculous amounts of fun!
Expertise:
Being a homebrew hero
Currently playing:
Carmageddon
Favourite game of all time:
IO



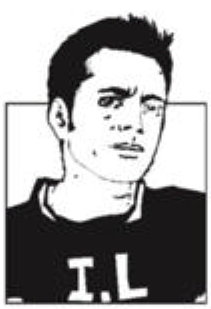
JOHN SZCZEPANIAK
Take The Bullet on DC. Unreleased, but with some very unusual ideas! Otherwise, *House Of The Dead 2*, probably
Expertise:
Japanese games
Currently playing:
Organising a trip to Japan
Favourite game of all time:
Star Control 2



PAUL DAVIES
Virtua Cop on the Saturn because, when it came out, the Saturn seemed capable of conquering the world. Also, the game I picked up on my first trip to Tokyo, so it still has sentimental value
Expertise:
Banging my head against a brick wall
Currently playing:
Halo 4
Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N Ghosts



DAVID CROOKES
I have never played a lightgun game, to my shame, but really wanted *Skeet Shoot* and *The Enforcer* on the GX4000 as a kid
Expertise:
All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Atari Lynx
Currently playing:
The Last Of Us
Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



IAIN LEE
Easy. *House Of The Dead 2* on Dreamcast. Was gutted when I found out it didn't work on my plasma TV
Expertise:
Pretending to be an American on Xbox Live
Currently Playing:
Halo 4
Favourite game of all time:
Elite (the BBC B version)

LOADING...



It's hard to believe, but this is now my 100th issue editing Retro Gamer.
During my time on this excellent magazine, I've been fortunate enough to break some amazing exclusives, secured interviews with the likes of Andrew Braybrook and John Carmack and even persuaded John Romero to guest edit Issue 75. I've spoken to the Stamper brothers about their Spectrum games, fulfilled my dream of interviewing the creator of *Strider* – my favourite game of all time – and, thanks to my dedicated team of freelancers, have caused numerous Wikipedia entries to be rewritten.

Retro Gamer has celebrated the creation of some of the world's most important games, from *Space Invaders* to *OutRun* and *Final Fantasy VII*. We've also created some truly stunning covers, and I really feel that we've greatly improved on the formula that Martyn Carroll and his talented team created when the magazine launched in 2004.

So, this is the perfect time to step down from the magazine, secure in the knowledge that I've done all that I could do with it.

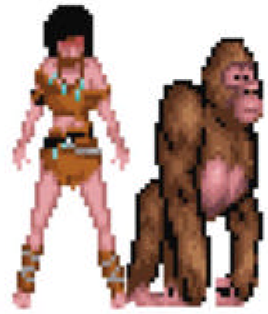
Except I'm not done yet – not by a long shot. I may have reached all of the original goals that I set myself when I first started on **Retro Gamer**, but I've also set myself quite a few new ones. So, here's to the next 100 issues. I'm game if you are.

Enjoy the magazine,





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>> **Load 118** Breathing new life into classic games

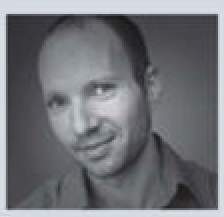
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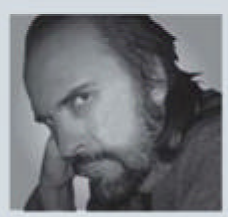
FLASHBACK to the future



RETRO REVIVALS

In the hot seat this month...



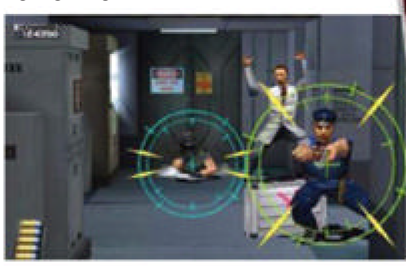




"It piles on the references to other superb games"

Samuel Roberts



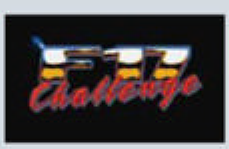


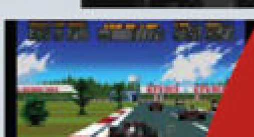




retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL









ESSENTIALS

RETRO RATED





retro radar

>> GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



>> The biggest gaming event of the year recently finished, so we've decided to focus on some of the more interesting titles that you can expect to play in the coming 12 months. We also deliver our definitive verdict on Chris Wilkins' recent Revival event

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» [Xbox One] It's been a long time coming, but we're finally getting a brand new *Killer Instinct* game.

NEW RETRO GAMES ANNOUNCED

WHAT DID READERS THINK OF THIS YEAR'S INCOMING GAMES?

This year's E3 was solely focused on the impending battle between Microsoft's Xbox One and Sony's PlayStation 4. In the eyes of almost everybody, Sony won the event due to its astute decision to stay away from the draconian DRM and lending policies that Microsoft announced and then quickly backpedalled on a couple of weeks later.



» [Xbox 360] Is it just us, or does the new high definition version of *Fable Anniversary* look a little disappointing? Find out in a later issue.

We're more interested in the classic franchises that were on offer, and in that respect, every potential owner of a next-gen console has several reasons to be very happy. Sony had the weakest showing, from an in-house point of view, because it was more focused on the continuation of current franchises like *Killzone* and *inFamous*. Things looked better for its current systems with more information about *Gran Turismo 6* and the announcement that rock-hard rogue-like *Spelunky* would be heading to PlayStation Vita, but it was otherwise slim pickings – although its focus on indie development should deliver interesting retro-themed gems going forward. The machine nevertheless impressed reader samhain81 who said, "My favourite highlight was when Sony announced the price of the PS4. Not only is it £80 cheaper than the Xbox One but also, in retrospect, it's £80 cheaper than the PS3 was at launch. That is a massive leap."

Aside from the reveal that Microsoft was releasing an anniversary version of the original *Fable* on Xbox 360 in 1080p with Smart Glass support, its main focus was the Xbox One. The game we're most excited about is *Crimson Dragon*. Originally intended as a Kinect game for Xbox 360, this spiritual successor to *Panzer Dragoon* looks absolutely beautiful and may be the closest we ever get to Sega's fantastic franchise. The other big surprise was the news that *Killer Instinct* is returning. Rare's combo-based brawler is being handled by Double Helix Games, with help from Ken Lobb who was heavily involved with the original games. Interestingly, two versions of the game are planned: a standard full price release and a free-to-play version that comes with one character, Jago, and the option of buying more. Rare has been teasing *Killer Instinct* ever since *Grabbed By The Ghoulies*, so it's good to see it finally materialise. It's struck a particular chord with forum member ShadowNeku who revealed that it "Looks like a *Street Fighter* game with the combos turned up a notch. Lovely graphics too." Samhain81 on the other hand isn't too sure about

Retro Gamer's E3 highlights

>> Our guide to some of E3's more interesting games

Crimson Dragon
System: Xbox One
Developer: Grounding, Land Ho! Co

We've been waiting for *Crimson Dragon* for absolutely ages now. It was first revealed as an Xbox 360 game back in 2011 at the Tokyo Game Show. Then known as *Project Draco*, it's a spiritual successor to Sega's *Panzer Dragoon* series (its creator Yukio Futatsugi was heavily involved in the first three *Panzer Dragoon* games). It's now known as *Crimson Dragon*, and will feature both Kinect and traditional hardware support. Players will be able to fly six different types of dragons, while they can be enhanced with over 100 different skills. Needless to say, we're very excited about this glorious looking on-rails shooter.

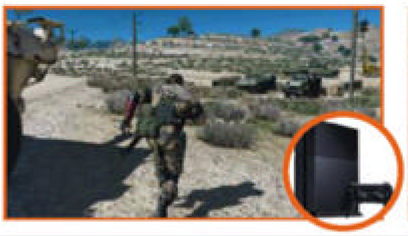
Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain
System: Various
Developer: Kojima Studios

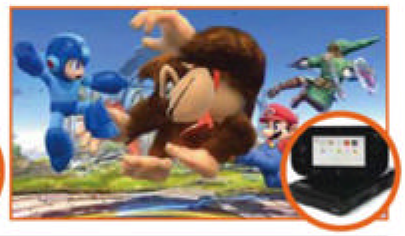
Hideo Kojima has led everyone on a merry chase with *Metal Gear Solid V*, but it's shaping up very nicely indeed. Interestingly, David Hayter will not be reprising the role of Solid Snake, with the new voice duties going to Kiefer Sutherland. The *24* actor is no stranger to videogames, having done voiceovers in the likes of *Call Of Duty* and *24: The Game*, but it's still strange that Kojima didn't go with fan favourite David. The trailer looked fantastic, with suitably interesting looking characters and some impressive action scenes. We'll be very surprised if it's out this year however.

Super Smash Bros
System: 3DS, Wii U
Developer: SORA Limited/Namco Bandai Games

We've always had a soft spot for this franchise, so it's pleasing to see that the new game is shaping up nicely. While the 3DS and Wii U versions won't be compatible with each other, they still look great, with the 3DS version in particular having a stylish cartoon look. As with many fighting games it's all about the engine and character reveals, and *Super Smash Bros* is looking particularly sweet. While The Villager from *Animal Crossing* and the Wii Fit Trainer look like great additions to the series it was Mega Man's amazing showing that had us truly salivating with excitement.



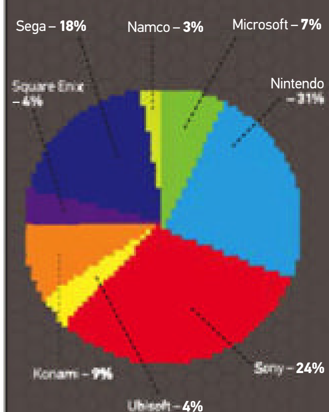




THE RETRO DEBATE

>> From the forum: Who won E3 for you?

VISIT **RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM** TO HAVE YOUR SAY



the new direction Rare's classic franchise is taking, revealing, "I saw how it played, then learnt that it was a digital release only, and a pay-to-play model as well, and an Xbox One exclusive. Disappointed to say the least."

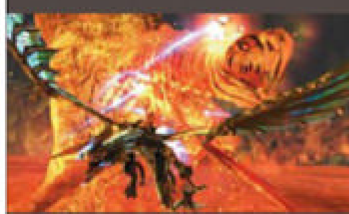
Nintendo's E3 was frustrating. While it announced a fair amount of great looking games, release dates continued to slip. *Mario Kart 8*, which features *F-Zero*-style anti-gravity sections, looked fantastic, but it will miss the crucial Christmas period. *Super Smash Bros* also looks wonderful, but is also a 2014 title. It's fortunate then, that *Wind Waker HD*, *Super Mario 3D World* and a new *Donkey Kong Country* game will arrive this year.

Wind Waker HD looks absolutely beautiful and has interesting Wii U integrations like gyroscopic controls, as well as changes to the Tingle Tuner that allow you to send messages in bottles to other players. *Donkey Kong Country: Tropical Freeze* appears to stick closely to the template found in the fun *Donkey Kong Country Returns*, but with the added inclusion of Dixie Kong. The most interesting was *Super Mario 3D World*. Initially it looked strange, with cat suits and a focus on four-player play, but the more we look at it the more we can see it has plenty of interesting new game mechanics.

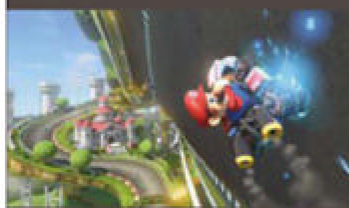
Nintendo also revealed further news about its new 3DS *Zelda* game, which is now known as *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds*. While it expanded on the gameplay shown several months back, ShadowNeku wasn't massively impressed. "I'm normally pretty hyped about new *Zelda* games but my interest in them is beginning to dwindle," he explained. "*A Link Between Worlds* looks very good but I've played so many now. Nintendo definitely needs to do something new with the franchise. Or just remake *Majora's Mask* already." R0jaws on the other hand quite liked Nintendo's offerings stating that: "The whole Nintendo catalogue will probably get a bit of attention from me. My next console purchase will probably be the Wii U followed by the PS4 so I am mostly interested in those franchises."

> "I'm normally pretty hyped about new Zelda games but my interest in them is beginning to dwindle" ShadowNeku

Although the focus of E3 was on the big three, there were plenty of interesting games from other developers. *Sonic: Lost World* looked great fun with interesting gameplay mechanics, while *Castle Of Illusion* looks like it's going to nail many aspects of the original game. Additional highlights included Square's update of *Thief* and the astonishing looking *Final Fantasy XV*, as well as Konami's glorious new trailer for *Metal Gear Solid V*, more information on *Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow 2*, and the news that Ubisoft is remaking the original *Far Cry* and continuing the *Trials* series. Namco also used E3 to announce *Pac-Man Museum*, a digital product that will include classic arcade games from *Pac-Man*'s earlier years and *Pac-Man Battle Royale*, which pits up to four players against each other in a frantic race for points. It's still too early to decide who's truly winning the next-gen race, but it's clear to see that there will be plenty of great games to enjoy.



» [Xbox One] This is from the director of *Panzer Dragoon*. It's as close to a sequel as we're ever likely to get.

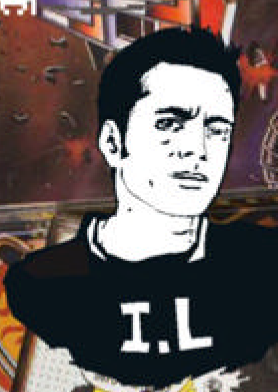


» [Wii U] Nintendo's racer takes a leaf out of *F-Zero*'s book with anti-gravity racing. But where's *F-Zero*?



» [Wii U] The new *Super Mario* game looks ace, but certainly wasn't what we were expecting. Cat suits and a multiplayer focus feature heavily.

Here's the bio...
Iain Lee has been a fervent gamer since he was tiny. And that was a long time ago. In between playing computer games and collecting crap from eBay, he has presented Channel 4's *The 11 O'Clock Show* and *Rise*, and currently does bits of stand-up as well as presenting the *2 Hour Long Late Night Radio Show* on Absolute Radio at 11pm.



Hi there, my name's **Iain Lee**. You might remember me from Thumb Bandits, The 11 O'Clock Show and Absolute Radio, but now I'm here to confess my love for retro

You've never had it so good

I was struggling to think about what to write this month. I've been doing this column for, what, three years? Something like that. If I'm honest, I've probably said everything I can about old videogames. I've done columns on shops, text adventures, selling my stuff, buying more stuff, the strange people I've met, how good the BBC was, how good the Dragon 32 was, how bad the VIC-20 was. What else can I talk about?

And then it hit me like a bolt from the blue; I thought I'd tackle cassettes and how they used to be stored. I don't know about you, but my preferred method of keeping tapes was in two blue, leather style (but actually very cheap plastic) cases that carried around 40 tapes each. I still have them somewhere in the garage.

I mentioned this rather entertaining idea to my friend Ben to gauge his reaction. I say friend, he is a colleague at the BBC office I sometimes work in. "Ben," I exclaimed excitedly, "I'm going to write about cassettes and how they are stored for **Retro Gamer**."

He gave me a bemused look before uttering, "So it doesn't have to be about old games then?"

"Uh?"

"The article, I thought it had to be about retro videogames?"

"It does."

"Right." Long pause while he took this information in followed by "So why are you writing about tapes then?"

"Are you serious?"

I was starting to get pissed off now. Ben is a pretty intelligent bloke. He wears glasses and has a beard and I suspected he was winding me up. I was keen to get cracking on what was surely going to be retro gold. This piece was going to set the forums alight as you, the reader, heralded one of the most incisive pieces of writing on the subject of old videogames since Steven Poole wrote that book. You know, that book he wrote. About games.

"What have old games got to do with tapes?"

Wow. He was serious. He had literally no idea.

"How old are you Ben?"

"24."

"Right, go and read a history book, possibly Steven Poole's one about games, and come back and apologise to me." And with that, I gave him a Chinese burn, a dead leg *and* a wedgie, and sent him on his sad little way.

The fact that kids these days (24 is still technically a kid in my eyes) are unaware of the torturous process we used to go through back in the day to get games to load via tapes, shows just how far we've come in terms of gaming technology. They want everything now, immediately (unless you own a PS3 and you have to endure its tedious update times) and would shudder knowing that sometimes we had to wait upwards of 18 days for a single game to load.

I recently opened my blue plastic tape cases. The tapes have gone – I gave them away as part of my midlife crisis – but the smell is still there. The smell of *Scarfman*, *Gyroscope* and *Speech*. A smell that will now forever be tainted with the stench of stupidity.

the wall

» EVERYTHING THAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN THE WORLD OF RETRO THIS MONTH

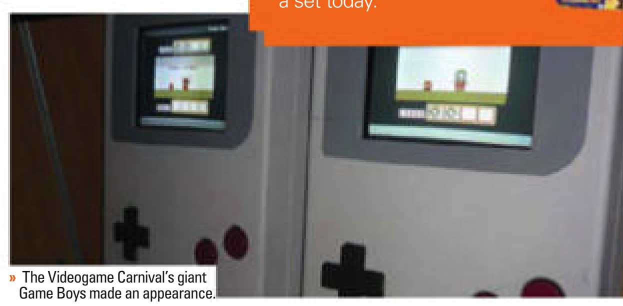


» There were several purveyors of retro goods present.

RETRO GAMER COASTERS OUT NOW

Fans of Retro Gamer will love our excellent coasters. Available in packs of four, they feature some of our best covers from the past 100 issues and are the perfect accompaniment to our excellent **Retro Gamer** mugs. Featuring high-quality prints and a strong cork backing, they're finished off with a lovely gloss finish, making them extremely durable. A pack of four costs just £4.99, so be sure to order a set today.





» The Videogame Carnival's giant Game Boys made an appearance.

RETRO GAMER VISITS REVIVAL

CHRIS WILKINS' NEW RETRO SHOW REALLY IMPRESSES

On 18 and 19 May, Wolverhampton racecourse Dunstall Park hosted Revival, an expo wholly dedicated to retro gaming. The men behind Revival Events are Craig Turner of Turnarcades and Chris Wilkins, who created his first show – The Retro Ball – way back in 2005.

"We wanted to create an event with an atmosphere that would take visitors back to the arcades of old and firmly plant a smile on their face throughout their visit," said Chris on the event's conception. "With Revival, Craig and I agreed we should look to tap into as many of the retro communities as possible for exhibits, complemented by a good selection of traders."

In addition to a selection of over 80 playable arcade machines and a variety of home computers and games consoles, Revival featured exhibits from the Retro Computer Museum and the Centre For Computing History. It also hosted talks with industry icons such as Sandy White and the Ocean crew. But for many, the draw was the games, and of these there were plenty to get excited about. The gaming wall that introduced visitors to the event was a delight – an amalgamation of nine television screens, each showing off an important slice of videogame history. Attendees could take in a multitude of home consoles, such as the Atari 7800 and Jaguar, Intellivision, Super Nintendo and Mega Drive, as well as computing behemoths of the past such as the ZX Spectrum, Commodore 64 and a working virtual reality unit.

When **Retro Gamer** was in attendance, Revival certainly seemed busy. "We were initially aiming for a conservative 800 visitors," said Chris, "but at its peak on Saturday, there were over 1,100 people in the building." The popularity of Revival, and the £1,200 in donations to RCM, The Centre For Computing History and Special Effect (a charity that helps children with disabilities to enjoy videogames) will ensure that Revival will almost certainly return in 2014. Check www.revivalretroevents.com for updates on all Revival events, including a mini-Revival planned for November.

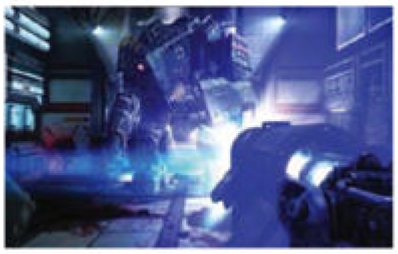


» Archer Maclean was in attendance, here signing a Commodore 64.



WOLFENSTEIN TO ARRIVE SOON

MachineGames' re-imagination of id Software's *Wolfenstein* franchise will arrive later this year and, interestingly, it's only going to be a single-player experience. Aside from *Wolfenstein RPG*, all games since *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* have featured multiplayer, so it seems strange to be missing now – particularly in today's market. On the other hand, we felt the last *Wolfenstein* had a pretty weak story, so maybe MachineGames will be able to hone those elements for *The New Order*. As long as we're able to kill a mech-Hitler – with some suitably over-the-top weapons – we'll be more than happy to continue the adventures of the brilliantly named BJ Blazkowicz.



» [Xbox One] We've no idea why multiplayer is absent, but we still want to kill this metal monstrosity.



SQUARE ENIX GETS ITS RPG ON

SO MANY RPGS, SO LITTLE TIME…

Square Enix had a solid showing at E3, announcing several new titles, as well as updates on existing ones. Its *Final Fantasy* franchise remains its biggest series, and the Japanese developer had plenty of RPG goodness to show off. *Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII* is due later this year and is bound to go down well with fans of the grumpy heroine. Square's latest trailer showed off the bustling city of Yusnaan and highlighted some of the impressive boss battles that Lightning and her friends will be participating in. If Square Enix can sort out the overlong tutorials that plagued *Final Fantasy XIII,* it could end up with something quite special on its hands.

Further *Final Fantasy* news came in the shape of *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn* and the first showing of *Final Fantasy XV*. *A Realm Reborn* is due out in August on PC and PS3, with the PS4 version arriving at a later date. It's essentially a rebuild of the rather poorly received MMORPG *Final Fantasy XIV,* and features a new engine, slicker interface and brand new gameplay.

Final Fantasy XV is also a rebranded game, being the new name for *Final Fantasy Versus XIII,* which was first announced in May 2006. Director Tetsuya Nomura is promising a darker game than previous titles in the franchise and that there will be a bigger emphasis on customisable battles and action gameplay. Square's final surprise was the news that its popular crossover series *Kingdom Hearts* would be getting a third instalment. Little was revealed, but we do know that it will continue from the story first featured in *Kingdom Hearts 3D: Dream Drop Distance*. You can expect more information on all four games in a later issue.

retro column

>> PAUL DAVIES GIVES HIS VIEWS ON THE RETRO WO

Here's my bio…

In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 …came editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, …urnalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to …d from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.



Hello, retro gamers. My name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of C&VG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years





Do gamers exist?

I'll be honest, I sometimes feel a bit embarrassed about being, you know… a gamer. But most of the time I'm happy to see that I'm not the only one – and that the numbers aren't dwindling.

It's E3 2013 as I write this. Xbox crashed and burned. PlayStation danced on the ashes. It has been a remarkable turn of events, no doubt about it, culminating in Microsoft staging a massive turnaround to try and save face. I'm glad that Xbox One became the Xbox '180'. For one thing, I love Halo far too much. But, moving on…

The highlight of E3 2013 for me wasn't any game, it was the gamers. It was the response to Sony at the PlayStation conference, the standing ovation for no restrictions on used games, and no need to be accountable (countable?) by logging in once a day like raising your hand every morning at school.

It's very likely that Sony had adjusted its strategy in the run up to E3. During the weeks prior, gamers dived into social networks en masse to rally against the Digital Rights Management policies announced for the new Microsoft console. The key thing here is that, whether or not Sony originally intended to include similar or identical DRM policies with PS4, it took the so-called 'vocal minority' seriously. Sony built the grand finale of its E3 2013 conference on the foundation of its response to gamers.

And. It. Was. Awesome. I almost cried. Almost. Okay, I cried a little bit. I'm crying right now.

In my book (metaphorical – I don't actually own a book in which I write down this sort of thing in blood) the major, most disappointing aspect of the whole Xbox One charade so far has been this lack of respect toward gamers; toward you and me. But to be fair, Microsoft isn't the only company to have fallen foul of such hubris. Remember the Sony conference from E3 2006?

Gamers won't be dragged along. We're not idiots. We have a real sense of what matters to us, and the rights that belong to us. Our chosen pastime isn't trivial, it's not an 'as well as' thing. So given the choice between a box that plays mostly awesome games with more besides if you really want it, and an all-in-one media monolith that places games and gamers in shackles, it's not a hard decision.

Therefore I'm glad, as I was genuinely having my faith tested in the existence of gamers as decision makers in matters of gaming progress, that it was gamers that turned the tide at E3 2013. We didn't look at all the Xbox One TV functionality and think 'Oh damn, well maybe in exchange for all this…' No, the number one consideration was how does Xbox One enhance my gaming? Games came first.

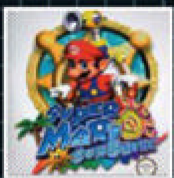
I would like to see games on a level footing with other forms of entertainment. As I've said before in **RG**, it irks me that games are sidelined in mainstream media on and off-line. But as long as gamers themselves remain the true guardians of my gaming future, I'll continue to be happy. It really was such a magical moment that I'll never forget, the day that gamers proved their existence in such a public way, like nothing has changed for years.



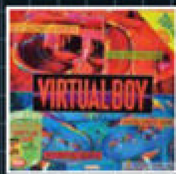
19 July – 16 August

retrodiary

>> A month of retro events both past and present



19 July 2002
■ *Super Mario Sunshine* arrives exclusively on Nintendo's GameCube console.



21 July 1995
■ Nintendo's Virtual Boy console is released in Japan. It bombed spectacularly thanks to its headache-inducing graphics and a lack of quality software.



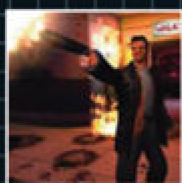
22 July 1985
■ Gremlin Graphics releases *Thing On A Spring* for the Commodore 64. Boingy boingy.

24 July 1946
■ Al Lowe, creator of the *Leisure Suit Larry* series of games, is born.

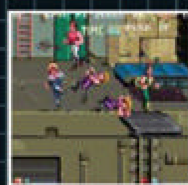




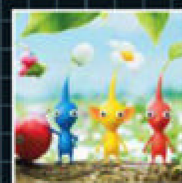
30 July 1996
■ Sega releases *Arcade Classics* for the Mega Drive. It was a compilation featuring the aged coin-ops *Centipede, Missile Command* and *Pong*.



27 July 2001
■ Max Payne makes his first appearance, when the game of the same name is released on PC.



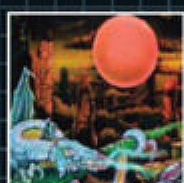
27 July 1987
■ Developed by Technos and published by Taito, the co-operative beat-'em-up *Double Dragon* arrives in arcades.



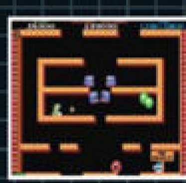
26 July 2013
■ Nintendo's *Pikmin 3* is due for its European release on the Wii U console.

TECMO

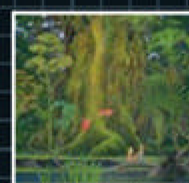
31 July 1967
■ Tecmo, the Japanese videogames developer, is founded. It started out as a supplier of cleaning equipment. In 1969, it began to diversify into amusements.



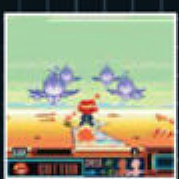
1 August 1985
■ Adventure writing maestros Level 9 release *Red Moon* on the ZX Spectrum.



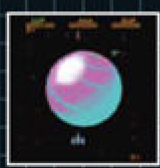
1 August 1986
■ Taito's cutesy yet ultra addictive coin-op *Bubble Bobble* is released.



6 August 1993
■ Squaresoft releases its new action RPG *Secret Of Mana*. It becomes another big hit for the developer.



12 August 1994
■ Sunsoft's *Panorama Cotton*, a *Space Harrier*-esque rail shooter, is released on the Genesis but only in Japan. Get importing!



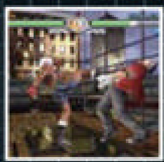
12 August 1983
■ The arcade coin-op *Saturn* is released. It was created by a certain Ashby Computers & Graphics for Jaleco…



9 August 1982
■ The best selling home computer of all time, the Commodore 64, is officially released in the USA at a price of $595.



8 August 2008
■ *Race Driver: Grid* is published by Codemasters for the Nintendo DS.



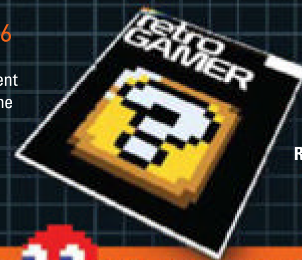
12 August 2003
■ The PS2 version of *Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution* reaches the US. It features two new fighters.



13 August 1982
The ColecoVision console hits the US. Strong initial sales were assisted by an equally strong pack-in game, the excellent *Donkey Kong*.



15 August 1986
■ Electronic Arts releases the excellent *Starflight* for PC. The Mega Drive version would appear five years later.

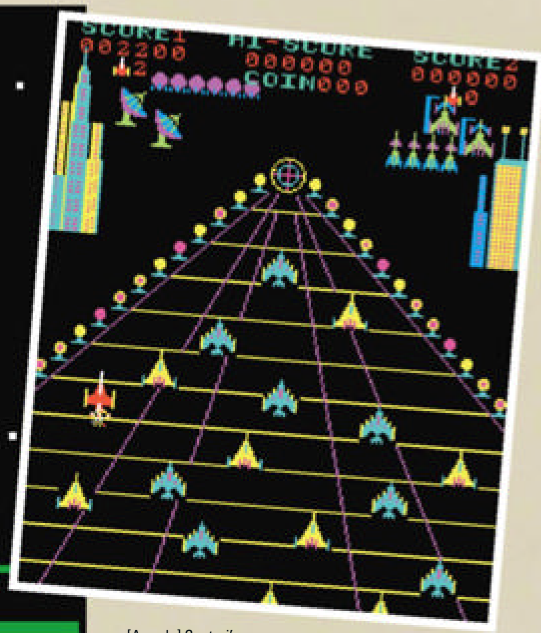


15 August 2013
■ New issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES



» [Intellivision] Beneath the pastel-coloured asteroids and blocky graphics was a great little shoot-'em-up that sold a million copies.



» [Arcade] Centuri's new game *Pleiades* benefited from having four varied and interesting stages… and a hint of *Pheonix* about it.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM APRIL 1981

APRIL 1981 – a Black Hole in arcades, Pleiades follows Phoenix, would Mariner sink or swim? Astrosmash sells big, Lion whimpers and Pelé plays four-a-side blobby soccer. Richard Burton goes for a dribble…



Space themed shoot-'em-ups were abundant in arcades, and there was to be no let-up in the constant flow of coin-op games being released by developers. This month was no different, with Tokyo Denshi Sekkei attempting to win people over with its rather mundane game *Black Hole*. Other than shooting the neutron mines and flying saucers, *Black Hole* was one of those titles that offered nothing new bar some graphics that were rather messily defined, even by 1981's standards.

So it was the turn of Tehkan (that went on to create *Bomb Jack* and was later renamed Tecmo) and Centuri to try their hands at fixed shoot-'em-ups when the companies combined forces to develop *Pleiades*. Given that Centuri had developed the rather excellent *Phoenix*, *Pleiades* appeared to have a fighting chance of garnering the interest of the gaming public.

Pleiades was influenced by *Phoenix*, with elements that seemed very familiar. There were swooping alien ships and one level featured bird-like enemies that flew down towards you. However, *Pleiades* did have four distinct stages, the fourth of which would see you try to negotiate past stationary spacecraft before being jettisoned back to stage one again. *Pleiades* did utilise certain fundamentals from *Phoenix*, but it was still an enjoyable videogame.

Obscure videogame developer Amenip produced a horizontally scrolling coin-op which had more than a whiff of *Scramble* about it. As opposed to a conventional space setting, it opted for the ocean and replaced the spaceship with a submarine. The game itself was called *Mariner*.



» [Game & Watch] *Lion* was much like other Game & Watch titles; simple to play, yet sales were strangely slow in comparison.

Armed to the teeth with torpedoes and missiles, you had to negotiate five stages with landscapes to traverse and an ocean full of nasties to blast. At the end of each stage was a testing boss submarine that you needed to dispatch. *Mariner* was good fun, and the undersea premise made for a pleasant change from the constant intergalactic space scenarios.

Newly released this month by Data East was *Lock 'N' Chase*, a maze game that saw you play a thief attempting to steal all the coins inside said maze while dodging four policemen. Although there were no power pills to consume, you could block the police off with walls. Once you had collected the full quota of coins it was onto the next level via one of two exits – and repeat, ad nauseum. Yep, it was a rehashed *Pac-Man* clone, and yep, it wasn't particularly enthralling.

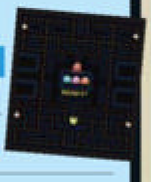
Away from the arcades there was more shoot-'em-up action, with the release of *Astrosmash* on Mattel's Intellivision console. *Astrosmash* was a colourful and brash *Space Invaders* clone with just a dash of *Asteroids* thrown in for good measure.

As with *Space Invaders*, you are based at the bottom of the screen, shooting vertically toward the oncoming alien foes. These included rocks of varying sizes (and garish colours) that split into smaller fragments when hit. Other enemies to eliminate were spinners, which caused you to lose a life if they hit you or the ground, and tricky homing missiles.

An interesting twist on the scoring system was that you had points deducted when nasties managed to slip past without being destroyed. There was

CHARTS

APRIL 1981



ARCADE

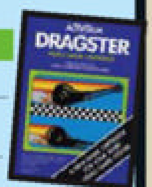
1 Pac-Man (Namco)
2 Missile Command (Atari)
3 Battlezone (Atari)
4 Defender (Williams Electronics)
5 Space Panic (Universal)

GAME & WATCH



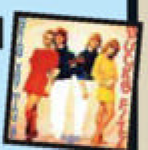
1 Fire (Nintendo)
2 Helmet (Nintendo)
3 Manhole (Nintendo)
4 Vermin (Nintendo)
5 Flagman (Nintendo)

ATARI 2600

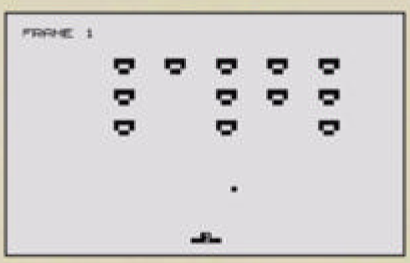


1 Dragster (Activision)
2 Fishing Derby (Activision)
3 Pelé's Soccer (Atari)
4 Video Pinball (Atari)
5 Laser Blast (Activision)

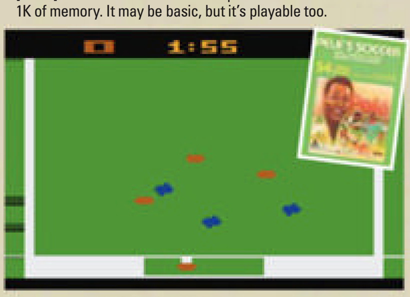
MUSIC



1 Making Your Mind Up (Bucks Fizz)
2 This Ole House (Shakin' Stevens)
3 Chi Mai (Ennio Morricone)
4 Lately (Stevie Wonder)
5 Einstein A Go-Go (Landscape)



» [ZX80] Be amazed at what can be produced with as little as 1K of memory. It may be basic, but it's playable too.



» [Atari 2600] *Pelé's Soccer* had simplistic graphics, but underneath was a sound two-player game.

APRIL WORLD NEWS



4 April saw Buck's Fizz win the Eurovision Song Contest with *Making Your Mind Up*. Katrina And The Waves achieved the same feat 16 years later.

10/11 April saw the Brixton Riots in Lambeth, South London. Violent clashes between protesters and the Metropolitan Police led to buildings and cars being burned. 299 Police officers were injured, with a reported 5,000 people involved in the fighting and unrest. This was in response to allegations of institutional racism and police brutality in the indiscriminate arresting of black people, using their infamous 'stop and search' policy.

12 April saw the first orbital flight of NASA's Space Shuttle program. Columbia was launched from the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida, USA and spent just over two days in orbit before returning to Edwards Air Force Base in California. The first two shuttle astronauts were John Young (commander) and Robert Crippen (pilot).

The aims of the shuttle's maiden mission were to assess its systems and monitor the performance of its launch, ascent, orbital flight, descent and landing. Despite some problems with heat shielding due to a number of the heat-resistant tiles falling off, Columbia passed its inaugural mission admirably.

19 April saw the birth of future Jedi Knight/Darth Vader actor Hayden Christensen. The Canadian actor starred as Anakin Skywalker in *Episode II* and *III* of the *Star Wars* prequel movies and was digitally shoehorned into the final scene of *Return Of The Jedi* as the ghost of Anakin, controversially replacing Sebastian Shaw. Christensen also appeared in the teleporting sci-fi movie *Jumper*.

"You had to negotiate five stages with landscapes to traverse and an ocean full of nasties to blast"

also a hyperspace option for when your situation looked doomed, and once activated it would randomly transport you to another part of the screen. If you found you really couldn't be bothered with pressing the fire button endlessly then there was also an auto-fire option for the truly bone-idle gamer.

It was these additional tweaks that really made *Astrosmash* stand out and helped it to shift over 1 million copies. It did so well that it eventually became the pack-in game for the Intellivision console.

After endless space blasting and graphics that could be likened to an explosion in a Duplo factory, be grateful for colour, sound and any semblance of speed with the release of *Super ZX80 Invasion* on the Sinclair ZX80, developed by Beam Software.

This was *Space Invaders* in its most rudimentary form. You did have the luxury of both 1K and 2K modes, which varied the game in the most unvaried way possible. 1K let you start with 12 aliens to destroy, while 2K mode started you off with 20 aliens and kept track of the number of waves of aliens you had despatched. You only had five lives and absolutely nothing to hide behind. Now that's blasting entertainment at its rip-roaring and minimalist best. Just don't bother complaining about magenta-coloured spaceships or blocky pink asteroids ever again.

Lion was the newest release in the Game & Watch series of handheld games from Nintendo, with this being the last in the *Gold* series range. *Lion* saw you controlling two lion tamers armed with chairs, trying to keep a cage full of lions from escaping through the three open doors on each side. *Lion* didn't capture the public's attention as previous Game & Watch offerings had, and it sold less than 250,000 units.

Atari 2600 owners were looking forward to the UK release of *Pelé's Soccer*, a festival of videogaming football at your fingertips. At first glance you would be hard pushed to recognise the graphics as resembling anything vaguely related to the beautiful game. Your team of four blobs – two defensive and one attacking – run up and down the vertically scrolling pitch hoping to score a goal past your computer-controlled goalkeeper blob.

It's not the most visually exciting rendition of football in the world but, given its limitations, was a reasonably fun game. The stiff Atari joystick with which you controlled your blobs was no fun at all though. After a typical game of *Pelé's Soccer* there was a distinct possibility that your arm could explode due to lactic acid build-up.

THIS MONTH IN...

ANALOG

The Atari magazine *ANALOG* took a look at the emerging Atari 2600 games developer Activision, highlighting some of its recent VCS games including *Dragster*, *Laser Blast* and *Fishing Derby*, as well as looking forward to the forthcoming release of *Freeway*. A certain David Crane was responsible for developing all of those titles.



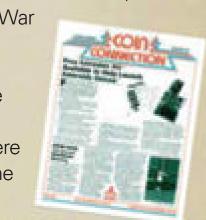
BYTE

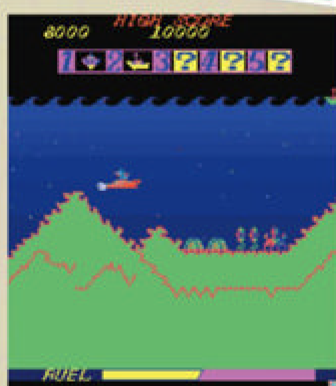
With an editorial on future computers, *Byte* predicted watch-sized systems with miniature disks as highlighted on its cover. Inside the magazine, computers were more conventional, with a review of the MicroAce – an unlicensed clone of the ZX80. Sinclair duly sued, won and production was stopped, making the machine an instant collectible.



COIN CONNECTION

Coin Connection revealed what Atari's two newest arcade releases were to be. First was *Warlords*, a four-player *Breakout*-style game set within a medieval story; the other was *Red Baron*, a realistic World War One first-person flight simulator housed in a large cockpit-styled cabinet. Both were due out within the coming weeks.

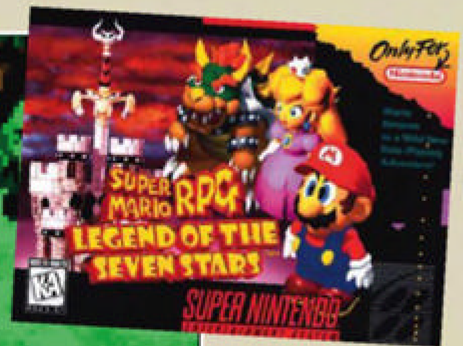




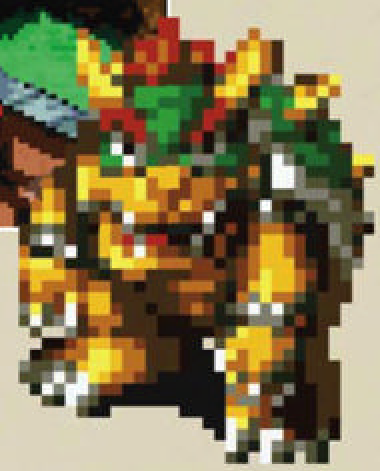
» [Arcade] Take *Scramble*, swap space with water and spaceship for submarine and you have *Mariner*. Despite similarities it played very well.

BACK TO THE NINETIES



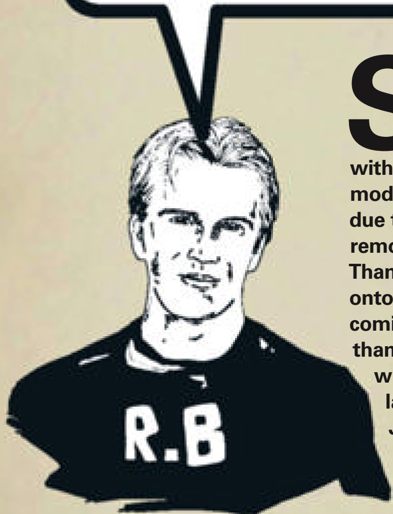


» [SNES] Square's penultimate offering for the SNES was another superb RPG. Nintendo, the SNES and N64 were going to miss the developer.



THE LATEST NEWS FROM MAY 1996

MAY 1996 – Saturn goes white, Metal Slug arrives, Final Doom goes brick hard, Sega takes Ages with retro coin-ops, Konami plot to mash your buttons, Lobo no-show and Pac-Man goes VR. Richard Burton pops a power pill…



Sega Japan announced it was to release a new Sega Saturn. Housed in a crisp white casing and packaged with a redesigned controller, the new model would also cost less to make due to Sega's cost-efficient decision to remove or merge certain components. Thankfully, the saving would be passed onto the customer, with the new model coming in at around 15 per cent less than the original Saturn. Sadly, this white version (much like many later Saturn models) remained a Japanese exclusive.

Out this month for the Neo Geo MVS system was the classic run-and-gun *Metal Slug: Super Vehicle – 001* published by SNK and developed by Nazca. The evil General Morden and his army have overthrown the governments of the world aided by a new all-terrain tank, the Metal Slug. It is your job to destroy his army and find and obliterate all of the Metal Slugs under his command.

You progress through levels laden with gun-toting enemies and vehicles with endless streams of ammunition, all intent on stopping you from saving the prisoners of war that are strewn throughout the levels. Save a POW and you are rewarded with extra weaponry and a scoring bonus at the end of the level. You could also utilise Super Vehicle – 001, a small yet manoeuvrable tank that you could hop into, increasing your attack and defence capabilities considerably.



» [Neo Geo MVS] Great graphics and fast-paced gameplay made the first game in the *Metal Slug* franchise a huge hit.

Metal Slug proved to be an instant hit, and one of the key elements that helped its popularity was its sense of humour. The opposing army were animated delightfully and were frequently shown to be anything but professional soldiers. Instead, they would be standing around talking or sunbathing while you unleashed your rain of bullets towards them.

If you liked your blasting action to be first-person rather than run-and-gun then rejoice at the release of *Final Doom*, published by id Software for PC DOS.

Final Doom was two separate 32 level games: *TNT: Evilution* and *The Plutonia Experiment*. TeamTNT, a group of *Doom* level-designing fans, created *Evilution*. Their levels were intended to be released as a freeware expansion for *Doom II*, but id Software stepped in and bought their work.

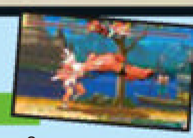
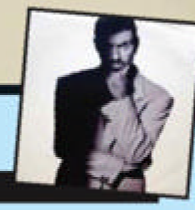
The Plutonia Experiment followed a similar story. *Doom* fans Dario and Milo Casali had already created several levels for the *Evilution* project, but decided to design their own set, impressing the powers that be at id Software. They continued to develop it into *The Plutonia Experiment*.

Both sets of levels were based on the *Doom II* engine and follow different stories that continued on from *Doom II*. They also played very well, but there was a recurring quibble regarding *Final Doom*; namely that it

CHARTS

MAY 1996



SEGA MEGA DRIVE

1. FIFA Soccer 96 (Electronic Arts)
2. Sonic & Knuckles (Sega)
3. Sonic The Hedgehog 2 (Sega)
4. Taz In Escape From Mars (Sony)
5. Mickey Mania (Sony)

PLAYSTATION

1. Street Fighter Alpha (Virgin)
2. Actua Soccer (Gremlin)
3. WipEout (Psygnosis)
4. Doom (GT Interactive)
5. Alien Trilogy (Acclaim)

ARCADE

1. Street Fighter Zero 2 (Capcom)
2. Fighting Vipers (Sega)
3. Dirt Dash (Namco)
4. Manx TT SuperBike (Sega)
5. Soul Edge (Namco)

MUSIC

1. Fastlove (George Michael)
2. Ooh Ahh… Just A Little Bit (Gina G)
3. Return Of The Mack (Mark Morrison)
4. Cecilia (Suggs feat. Louchie Lou and Michie One)
5. Nobody Knows (The Tony Rich Project)

MAY WORLD NEWS

12 May saw the premiere of the made-for-television *Doctor Who* movie starring Paul McGann as the new Doctor, replacing Sylvester McCoy. The UK would get to see the movie on the 27 May.

The movie was created in collaboration with the BBC, Universal Studios and 20th Century Fox with the intention of reviving the *Doctor Who* franchise so an American produced television series could be created. It was well received in the UK but not so in the USA and, as such, the proposed series wasn't commissioned.

20 May saw the sad passing of the actor Jon Pertwee, who famously played the third regeneration of the time-travelling Doctor. He also played the children's television favourite Worzel Gummidge, a scarecrow that came to life. Pertwee died of a heart attack aged 76. Worzel must've had his crying head on that day.

23 May saw Swedish adventurer Göran Kropp reach the summit of Mount Everest on his second attempt. Amazingly, he made the ascent on his own, without Sherpa support or oxygen supplies. He also cycled thousands of miles from Sweden to get there. After completing the climb he cycled back to Sweden again. Just 12 days earlier, nine climbers had died on Everest from exposure having been caught out by a ferocious blizzard, even with oxygen and Sherpa support. The same blizzard stopped Kropp's first attempt at scaling Everest.

was completely unforgiving and supremely difficult for anyone other than hardcore *Doom* players.

Sega Saturn gamers with a hankering for arcade days gone by were positively bursting with the news that Sega would be re-releasing many of its favourite AM2 coin-op favourites under the title of *Sega Ages*.

First to be lined up for pixel perfect conversion were *OutRun*, *After Burner II* and *Space Harrier*, complete in all their super-scaling glory. Japan would get to see the first wave of releases within a few months, with each game available as a separate release.

Later in the year Europe and the USA would get *Sega Ages Volume 1*, a compilation featuring all three games. To make all three games fit on one disk they had to omit the original arcade soundtracks, instead preferring to use new, remixed soundtracks. Still, all three games played wonderfully on the Saturn and proved once again that Yu Suzuki and his AM2 development team knew how to produce an all-time classic videogame.



» [PC] *Final Doom* was two sets of new levels that were nothing short of brick hard. Not for newbies to *Doom*…

» [SNES] The anti-hero Lobo would've been perfect for a beat-'em-up, yet *Lobo* projects were shelved twice.



Another arcade institution getting a new lease of life was *Track & Field*, thanks to original developers Konami. *International Track & Field* was to be released on the PlayStation and also in coin-op form, albeit only in Japan and renamed *Hyper Athlete*.

It featured a roster of 11 events including swimming, hammer and the usual track and field button mashing disciplines with some splendidly designed 3D graphics. The four-player option also provided the game with longevity.

Square duly kept its word by completing and releasing its final American SNES game this month, the excellent *Super Mario RPG: Legend Of The Seven Stars*, having recently announced that they would no longer support Nintendo and would be developing games for the PlayStation. Sadly, *Super Mario RPG* wasn't ever given a European release.

Ocean Software revealed it was developing a game based on the DC Comics anti-hero Lobo, a super-strong alien mercenary with a penchant for ultra-violence and cigars. Unsurprisingly, the game was planned to be a beat-'em-up for the SNES and Mega Drive yet, despite positive previews, was never released.

» [Sega Saturn] *Sega Ages* was a must have compilation with some great Eighties Sega coin-ops in one package.



In 2003 another *Lobo* beat-'em-up was under development by Kemco for PlayStation and Xbox and, once again, was cancelled before completion.

Namco had interesting news of an imminent arcade release starring its old friend Pac-Man. The Virtuality Group had developed the *Pac-Man VR* coin-op game, stating that you could now see the world through Pac-Man's eyes as you became fully immersed in a 3D virtual reality version of the game in which you can run through the maze yourself.

Once you had clambered aboard the VR unit and donned the headset the graphics were amazing. Being chased by a ghost or ploughing through lines of dots never looked better. Sadly, the game ended up being little more than a videogaming novelty and, at the uncompetitive price of $5 for five minutes worth of play time, you could see why…

THIS MONTH IN…

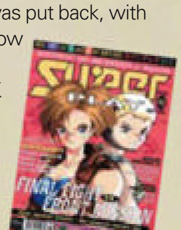
OFFICIAL SEGA SATURN MAGAZINE

Interesting preview of the month was *Discworld* by Psygnosis. It was attempting to turn Terry Pratchett's universe into a point-and-click adventure. The result was a slick product with voice acting from Eric Idle, Jon Pertwee and Rob Brydon, although the gameplay was criticised for being too demanding.



SUPER PLAY

The big news story of the month was that Nintendo had decided to delay the launch of the N64 yet again. For the third time in as many months the date was put back, with the first official release now standing at 23 June for gamers in Japan. The UK release was a further ten months away. Sadly, the predicted SNES version of *Killer Instinct 2* never saw release.



MEAN MACHINES SEGA

Featuring in a mammoth eight-page review was *Panzer Dragoon II Zwei*. The reviewers lavished it with praise and love. 'Stunning', 'beautiful', 'sweeping' and 'majestic' were used in its description and, to be fair, it deserved it. It was a wonderful gaming experience indeed, with a concoction of lovely graphics and atmospheric music.



retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL



F17 Challenge

TEAM 17 DOES FORMULA 1

#64

» AMIGA » TEAM 17 » 1993

When the Amiga was at its most popular during the early to mid- Nineties, we seemed to have plenty of racers available. When this title came along from Team 17, a lot of people asked if we needed yet another Formula One game. Having enjoyed a few of their previous games, such as *Alien Breed* and *Project X*, I decided to give it a go.

The lights turn green and we're off. The first thing I noticed is that I was bashed about for the first part of the lap as all the cars jostled for position. Colliding with cars obviously causes damage, and the higher the percentage of damage, the less likely you are to finish the race. You can make a pit stop – which will lose you places – but if you don't, and you reach 100 per cent damage, the race is over. At one point I had to complete a lap stuck in fourth gear – it cost me five places and I scored no points.

Playing *F17 Challenge* is quite simple. The computer-controlled cars are a real pain and not very realistic as they sweep from one side of the track to the other. However, what we expect from this sort of game is speed, and this has plenty, with the on-screen graphics moving along at a fast pace. The sound and music are not entirely up to the usual Team 17 standards; however, it was not programmed by their usual crew. *F17* has some nice touches and I preferred this to the Nigel Mansell effort, it just lacks a little excitement and a two-player option. It was released as a budget game though and, for the price at the time, was certainly worth a play.



RETROBATE PROFILE

- » **NAME:** ASHLEY HODGETTS
- » **JOINED:** 29 AUGUST 2008
- » **LOCATION:** CROWS NEST
- » **OCCUPATION:** BAKER
- » **FAVE GAME SYSTEM:** CPC/AMIGA

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FLASHBACK TO THE FUTURE

As Flashback turns 21, Darran Jones speaks to Paul Cuisset about his breakout hit, that difficult 3D sequel and how the 16-bit classic is being updated for a brand new generation of gamers

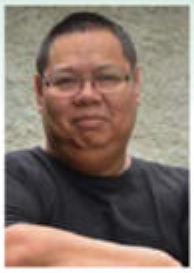


» [Amiga] *Flashback's* animation is absolutely superb, building on the rotoscope techniques used in *Prince Of Persia* and *Another World.*

The inspiration for videogames can come from the unlikeliest of places. Eugene Jarvis came up with the idea of *Robotron* while struggling to play *Berzerk* with a broken arm. *Breakout* was inspired by the growing popularity of racquetball, while *Missile Command* sprang from David Theurer having a repeated nightmare about an incoming nuclear war. The origin of *Flashback*, Paul Cuisset's wonderfully cinematic platformer from 1992, is equally bizarre, tracing its roots back to a meeting with US Gold and one of the most important films of modern cinema.

"It was an adaptation of *The Godfather*," Paul Cuisset tells our astonished ears. "US Gold came to us at Delphine and they had the licence to make a game and they wanted us to create something. We suggested to make a game in the future; *The Godfather* in space," he tells us as he laughs with *Flashback*'s new co-scenarist Kurt McClung. "I think we took it quite far in the future and when we came to US Gold and showed them what we did they said 'Okay, it's very far from what we had in mind, but it's a cool game so let's continue and do something with this.' That's how *Flashback* started."

We can only marvel at the earlier pitch and what might have happened if Cuisset had been allowed to continue with his original vision, but there's no denying that US Gold made the right decision in allowing the talented French developer to continue with his new game. The end result was a superb cinematic platformer, and while it liberally borrowed concepts from other popular games and hit movies of the time, it also felt refreshingly new and suitably different from many of its Mega Drive peers.



» Paul Cuisset made his name with the excellent *Flashback.*

At this point in our story agitated Amiga owners are most likely muttering 'but it came out on the Amiga first' into their current **Retro Gamer**, and while it's true that the 16-bit computer was the first system to feature *Flashback*, it certainly wasn't the original platform as many have always thought. When we asked Paul what his favourite version of the game was he hit us with the following blindside. "The best version for me is the Mega Drive version. The game was created for this platform."

Thinking that our ears were still faulty after hearing about *The Godfather* revelation we asked Paul to repeat himself. "It was the main platform," he confirms. "It was a port on the Amiga; the main platform was the [Mega Drive]."

Regardless of its home system origins, there's no denying that *Flashback* remains a fantastic game, mainly because the enjoyable platforming and action is married to impressive cutscenes and a highly entertaining, if slightly goofy, story. Relying on one of videogaming's greatest clichés, *Flashback* tells the story of a man who wakes up, only to have no idea of who he actually is. Before long, the amnesiac stumbles across a Holocube that reveals he is in fact Conrad B Hart, an agent working for the Galaxia Bureau Of Investigation who discovered a plot involving shapeshifting aliens that have seized high positions within the government and are planning on taking over the Earth. Conrad must then retrieve all his memories and work out how to stop the alien threat. ▶

FLASH FACTS

Many think Conrad's involvement in a dangerous game show is based on *The Running Man*, but this isn't true. Paul tells us that it's actually inspired by a French film called *Le Prix Du Danger.*



» [GBA] The only version of *Flashback Legends* is in French. Translated text does exist for it however.

» [Mega Drive] There are all sorts of cool gadgets that Conrad can use to aid his quest.



It's an enjoyable tale, enhanced by the fluid animation of Conrad and the imaginative design of the locations he finds himself in. Your amnesic-stricken hero must leap and climb around the jungles of Titan, eventually entering a futuristic city, before teleporting to the aliens' home world in an attempt to destroy it. The cinematic cutscenes used throughout *Flashback* do a great job of conveying Paul's story, but the developer admits that it wasn't an easy process. "Yeah they were quite difficult to create," he recalls. "We had made a polygon tool for the cutscenes and it was very painful [laughs] to draw all the scenes frame by frame. It was very long. Of course we had rotoscoping to help us, but it was very time consuming. I think we wanted to have an experience like a film and it was important to have these cutscenes within the game."

Committing to the painstakingly slow process paid off for Paul and his team, as *Flashback* delivered an epic feel that many similar games at the time simply didn't have. Of course, it's worth noting that *Flashback*'s approach certainly wasn't unique, as Eric Chahi and his team (who were also at Delphine) had pulled off a similarly impressive trick — without dialogue to boot — the previous year with the superb *Another World*. Another similarity between *Flashback* and Eric Chahi's game is, of course, *Flashback*'s beautiful animation, which, like *Another World* and Jordan Mechner's *Karateka* and *Prince Of Persia* before it, relies on rotoscoping to pull off Conrad's impressive athleticism. "We wanted to have something to work on with the animation and we had an experiment with a guy and a camera and we filmed him, and then we tried to draw over the image," remembers Paul. "We couldn't fully match it, but it was so realistic. There was no question. After that, I knew that we had to use that technique. We'd seen *Prince Of Persia* and also *Another World*, which was at Delphine too, and it was quite a source of inspiration for us."

In addition to providing inspiration for Paul's game, Eric Chahi's 1991 adventure also caused plenty of confusion with gamers as well. Despite actually having its own sequel (the Mega-CD 1994 exclusive *Heart Of The Alien*), many gamers actually believe that *Flashback* is *Another World*'s true sequel. We asked Paul if he got frustrated with the confusion that has appeared between the two games over the years and if it annoyed him. "Sometimes," he admits. "Of course *Another World* was a great game, but they were two completely different spirits. I think people who have played both know the difference."

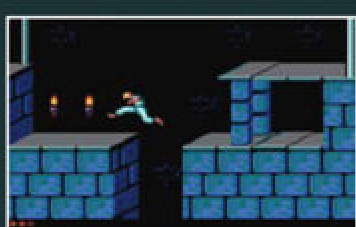
It's easy to see on first glance where the confusion comes from, as both games are by the same company and both feature similar story telling and graphical techniques. We'd argue though, that the animation of *Flashback* is far more ambitious than *Another World*'s, yet the fluid animation that Paul wanted caused one of the biggest technical problems for the game. "We had a lot of animations and a lot of frames because, of course, it's like a cartoon and each frame is a sprite in itself," recalls Paul about the difficulties of breathing life into Conrad B Hart. "We had more than 1,000 frames of animation for Conrad himself, and of course the most important thing was the memory. The game was created for the Mega Drive at that time. At that time the cartridge size was only 16

CINEMA IN MOTION
We chart the evolution of the cinematic platformer



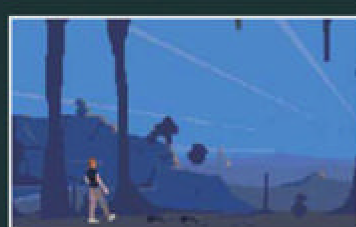
IMPOSSIBLE MISSION
■ 1984 ■ EPYX

For many, this is where the roots of the cinematic platformer began. Although he doesn't feature rotoscoping, Special Agent 4125 is as well animated and athletic as his later peers, easily navigating the treacherous rooms of Elvin Atombender's lair. It keeps its story elements to a minimum, but the stylish box art and Elvin's chilling taunts leave no doubt that Dennis Caswell was trying to make this into a miniature movie.



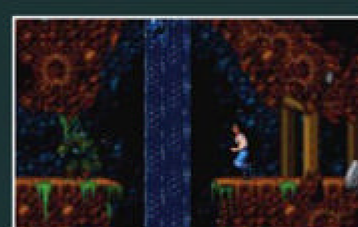
PRINCE OF PERSIA
■ 1989 ■ BRØDERBUND

Jordan Mechner once studied as a film student, so it should come as no surprise to learn that he put so many of the cinematic disciplines he learned into his early games. While *Karateka* toyed with the themes of narration in a videogame, it was his superb *Prince Of Persia* that cemented his reputation and delivered a brand new type of gaming experience. It's also one of the first videogames to use rotoscoping.



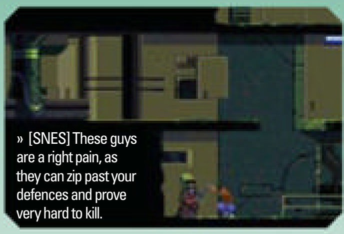
ANOTHER WORLD
■ 1991 ■ DELPHINE SOFTWARE

If *Prince Of Persia* took the first tentative steps in using a videogame to tell a cinematic story, it was Eric Chahi's *Another World* that gleefully ran with the concept. Once again using rotoscoping to breathe life into main character Lester, *Another World* upped the ante by delivering wonderfully cinematic backdrops and fantastic locations that were truly out of this world (and yes, we know what we did there).

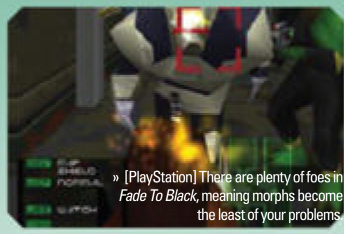


BLACKTHORNE
■ 1994 ■ BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT

This adventure from Blizzard Entertainment is huge, taking place over 17 sprawling levels. Blending fantasy with science fiction, *Blackthorne* sees your beautifully animated hero leaping and shooting his way through the cleverly crafted levels on his way to defeat an evil overlord. It still looks fantastic after all this time, and features plenty of neat gameplay mechanics like the ability to hide in shadows to avoid getting hit by enemies.



» [SNES] These guys are a right pain, as they can zip past your defences and prove very hard to kill.



» [PlayStation] There are plenty of foes in *Fade To Black*, meaning morphs become the least of your problems.



» [PlayStation] While the controls are clunky at times, it's immensely satisfying taking down big enemies.

mega-bits. That was the biggest, and we managed to negotiate with Sega to have a 24 mega-bit cartridge."

We were keen to discover how Paul was able to convince what was one of the biggest Japanese publishers at the time to create a more expensive cartridge for his game and the sort of relationship he had with the company. We were suitably impressed by his ingenuity: "We didn't have too much contact with them. It was only really when we showed them the game, and they were quite surprised because there was no cartridge of 24 mega-bits at the time. We created it ourselves (there was an engineer in our department) and so they were quite surprised to see that we had created our own cartridge." Paul's gamble paid off and he was able to secure the precious extra memory for *Flashback*'s super slick animation. Despite the additional space, Paul still had issues continuing. "We had a lot of memory but we had to decompress everything in the meantime because there were so many frames. We had to compress everything and technically that was quite difficult to keep the frame rate and the animation."

The end result was certainly worth it however, as *Flashback* looked absolutely jaw dropping and incredibly lifelike. The gameplay proved to be equally as good and, although *Flashback* was a simple platformer at heart, Paul and his team added plenty of interesting mechanics to make *Flashback* stand apart from similar games. There are subtle adventure elements in *Flashback*, while later stages see Conrad going on various delivery jobs to earn false papers. While many games had been created around jobs in the past, not many featured it as a gameplay mechanic. "It came from the background of the film," continues Paul. "Previously we did mostly adventure games so it was quite natural to try and bring a story into a platform game. The idea was to mix different kinds of games, a platformer, an adventure. That's why we created the city of Washington and all the player interaction that the player can have in that city. The idea was to try to tell a story [bigger] than what was done before at that time. I wanted to have a story and a universe that would be deeper."

Paul's plan worked, and *Flashback* was eventually released to critical acclaim on virtually every format it appeared on. In addition to the Mega Drive and Amiga, *Flashback* popped up on PC, 3DO, SNES, Atari Jaguar and even more eclectic machines like the NEC PC-9801, FM Towns Marty and Acorn Archimedes. It would go on to become one of the most successful French developed games of all time, even entering the Guinness World Records at one stage. Conrad may have entered suspended animation as *Flashback* reached its exciting conclusion, but his adventure was far from over. Paul had other plans for his intrepid adventurer, but this time, the stakes would be far higher.

As with many popular videogames of the time, *Flashback* received a sequel, a massively ambitious sequel that would push the series in new directions, directions that weren't always for the best.

Fade To Black's storyline followed on directly from the events of the original game. After blowing up the home planet of the Morphs, Conrad enters suspended animation and is discovered half a century later. He's soon broken out of prison by a mysterious helper known as John O'Conner and finds himself on the run. It's a bold story concerning viruses and betrayal, capturing all the essence of the original game. The story is enhanced by CGI cutscenes, although it's worth noting that they lack the charming simplicity of the original game.

Although *Fade To Black*'s storyline evoked the essence of the original game, the actual gameplay wasn't quite as successful. This was mainly due to *Fade To Black* being 3D and, if we're honest, the ambitious jump to the third dimension was a little too much for Paul's cult hero. He freely admits that the technical requirements did cause his team a number of issues. "It was quite difficult because the technology was so different," confirms Paul about Conrad's difficult ▶

FLASH FACTS

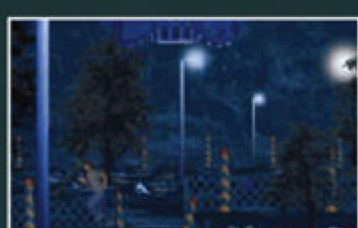
■ A Marvel comic book was released with *Flashback* in the states. It was supplied with the SNES, Genesis and Sega-CD versions, better explaining the original story.



ODDWORLD: ABE'S ODDYSEE

■ 1997 ■ ODDWORLD INHABITANTS

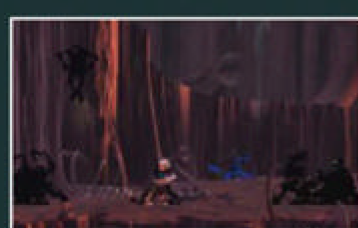
Yes we all happily made constant farts as soon as we found the button, but there was more to Abe than simply being a flatulent alien. *Abe's Oddysee* was an incredibly ambitious game, featuring a bleak, moving storyline, plenty of clever gameplay mechanics – most notably the ability to possess enemies – and a raft of devious puzzles. It also looked fantastic in an impossibly bleak kind of way and paved the way for three great sequels.



ONESCAPEE

■ 1997 ■ INVICTUS GAMES LTD

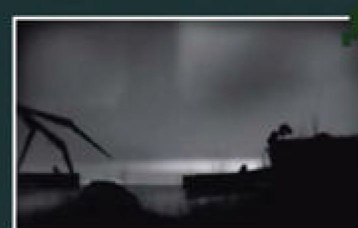
It's a bold developer that creates a CD-based game for a machine that doesn't naturally support the format. Nevertheless, that's exactly what Invictus Software did, releasing its CD *Flashback* tribute on the Amiga 1200. It was a gamble, but an impressive one, as the medium really allowed the amazing animation and lush visuals to stand out. The gameplay is solid as well, with a healthy mix of exploration and all out blasting.



HEART OF DARKNESS

■ 1998 ■ AMAZING STUDIO

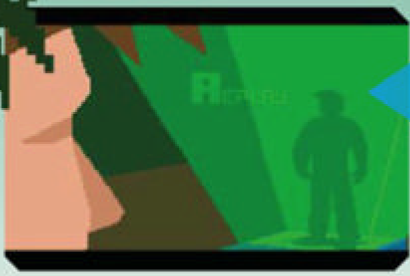
After success with *Another World*, Eric Chahi stuck to the same principles for *Heart Of Darkness*. It earned plenty of press thanks to its use of 3D glasses and praise from Steven Spielberg and seemed an assured hit. Unfortunately, despite some breathtaking animation and a delightfully whimsical story – a boy and his dog get transported to an alien planet – *Heart Of Darkness*'s insane difficulty put many gamers off.



LIMBO

■ 2010 ■ PLAYDEAD

This is one of the most recent examples of the genre and it remains a macabre delight. There's no speech as your unnamed hero goes in search of his missing sister, but it's not needed as developer Playdead has structured its game so well that the story is almost palpable. It's rather gruesome as well, with plenty of deadly surprises in store as you work your way through the dreary monochromatic world.





transition to the third dimension. "We had to create a whole new engine, and we had a lot of technical problems because we were learning how to place the camera, how to control the character. It was really something that we had no experience of. It was a very interesting experience, but also a frustrating one because as we had so many technical challenges, we lost a little bit of the spirit of the original game."

While *Flashback* had been a side-on platformer with adventure elements, *Fade To Black* was a full-blown third-person adventure. Conrad was still able to run, but he had lost much of his original athleticism, being no longer able to jump or climb. The controls were also far clunkier than the original game – although some purists might argue that even the controls of *Flashback* didn't match the fluidity of its visuals – which also hurt Paul's 3D vision.

FLASH FACTS

■ *Fade To Black* was due to be released on both the Sega Saturn and Nintendo 64 at one point, but both ports were sadly cancelled.



» [Xbox 360] We don't remember these guys looking like Terminators in the original game. They look really scary.

Paul was refreshingly frank about *Fade To Black*'s control issues. "I think the controls were difficult because we were in a new 3D environment and trying different things. We were one of the first games to have a third-person camera and I think we made a lot of mistakes at that time, but now I think the game would be really different knowing the way things are done now. We've learned a lot in the past 15 years."

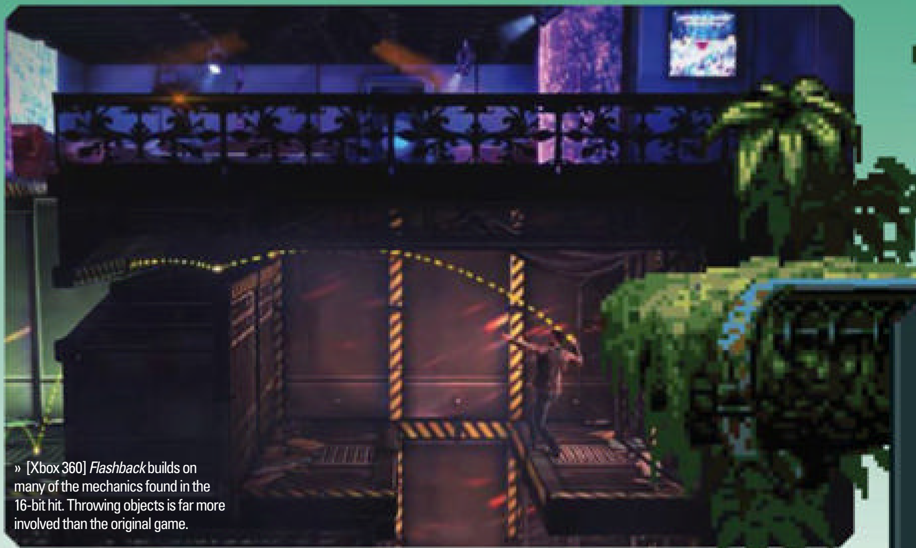
It's worth remembering that, while *Fade To Black* wasn't a perfect game, it was a far from poor one. Yes the controls were cumbersome at times, but there was no doubting that Paul and his small team had crafted a genuinely interesting adventure that cleverly mixed combat and puzzles in the same way that the original 2D game had managed. There was a bigger emphasis on Conrad's inventory this time around, while communications prompts and lots of interaction with the environment ensured that it felt like a suitable evolution from its elder 2D peer. *Fade To Black* also wasn't afraid to mix genres, and while the action is predominantly from the third person perspective you also get to take part in a basic 3D shoot-'em-up. "The game system had changed a lot in *Fade To Black* and that was the thing that really made the game different. Because you couldn't climb, it wasn't a platform game," continues Paul, "so I had some frustrations about that, about the fact that it was a plain interface. That was a technical problem because we chose at that time to choose ray casting and it made things quite difficult."

It's worth noting that *Fade To Black* was very cutting edge for its time, with gamers needing a good 3D card to get the most out of it, unless of course they were playing the PlayStation version of the game. It's also worth noting that it was out a good year before the likes of *Tomb Raider*, which would go on to redefine what gamers expected from third-person adventures. While a 2D game would have solved many of *Fade To Black*'s issues, Paul still feels that the decision was correct to move the series into the third dimension and remains happy with his sequel, even though he knows it's far from perfect. "I was pleased with the story, and with the way that we told that story," he continues. "The fact that there were a lot of people around us and that we were not alone working on the game [also helped]. For me it was one of our first games where it had that kind of mood where you really feel that you're not abandoned in the game and there was an epic story with it. I was happy with it. We could have done something better but it's not always possible."

Despite middling reviews at the time, *Fade To Black* still proved popular on release, eventually hitting Platinum status on the PlayStation meaning that it had sold over 400,000 units on its first year of release. Another sequel was planned, but this time it would return to its 2D roots. *Flashback Legends* was due for release on the Game Boy Advance and was a collaboration between Delphine Software and Adeline Software International. Unfortunately, the game itself was never released, as Delphine Software International was shut down in 2004 and *Flashback Legends* was shut down with it. Our tale might end there, but fate intervened and a near complete, but extremely bug-ridden version of the game eventually appeared online, allowing us to experience the missing link of the *Flashback* puzzle. In many aspects it's similar to the original Mega Drive game, albeit with far gaudier visuals. The only version of the game is understandably in French, but there are enough snatches of English translation to see that it follows on from previous games. Gameplay-wise it is extremely similar to *Flashback*, with a mixture of shooting and exploration, although there's a notable difference in the puzzles, which are very simplistic, relying on doors being opened by colour-coded keys. Despite the overall roughness of the uncompleted code, it's clear to see that it retains the essence of *Flashback* and we were keen to know about Paul's involvement with the game. "*Flashback Legends* was launched by Delphine and they hired a small studio to do the game," he tells us. "I think that they didn't believe it would succeed. I was working on another game, *Moto Racer*, so I just had some creative input and gave them some advice, but I was not [actively] involved in the project. I've tried some early prototypes, but I've never seen the game finished".

An adventure like Conrad's doesn't end with the story of a cancelled game however, and while the news of *Flashback Legends*' demise came as a blow to fans at the time, the story of Conrad has been given new life thanks to Paul and many of the original team who are currently preparing to unleash a brand new *Flashback* on the modern





» [Xbox 360] *Flashback* builds on many of the mechanics found in the 16-bit hit. Throwing objects is far more involved than the original game.

gaming world. Currently pencilled in for this year's Summer Of Arcade, *Flashback* is a reimagining of the classic game and features many of the original team, something that pleases Paul greatly.

"It was like *Mission: Impossible*, where the guys go and recruit all the specialists," he tells us, laughing. "We [have] five from Delphine in the team and we have three more people in production. We have the vice-president of Delphine Software with us also. We also have an animator who worked with [us] at the time and the programmer of the Amiga version."

One thing that's worth noting about this new *Flashback* is that, while it sticks to the template of Conrad's original adventure and plot, it builds on both greatly, adding stuff that Paul couldn't include the first time around. We were interested in this as it sounds like Paul is having a George Lucas moment, changing a classic in a way that might not please everyone. "I think we've taken a lot of risks, but I hope these risks will be well received and bring something different to the game," comments Paul when we ask him. "I think the game is quite different from the original one, but we've tried to keep the spirit of the first game."

That spirit is easy to see just by looking at the screens shown on this spread. While there is no doubt that games such as the *Uncharted* series and *Shadow Complex* have inspired both the game's look and its hero (there's a whiff of Nathan Drake to Conrad now) it still looks unmistakably like Paul's 1992 classic. If it's aesthetically quite similar, it's clear that Conrad will now control much differently, with a bigger emphasis on slicker controls that will match the super smooth animation that the original game was first famed for. "We started with the same story but we added more detail to it," confirms Paul about *Flashback*'s changes. "It's deeper and the character of Conrad is also much deeper. In terms of gameplay we've added tons of things. The interface is different, the joystick is different, so we've tried to use this to the maximum. We've added plenty of new things to the game itself, like the ability to 360-degree shoot. We also use the glasses. In the first game they talk about the glasses but you never saw them. You will use them a lot in the new version. You can throw things also, like in the first one, but we've added different things like a trajectory that allows you to be very precise. We've tried to make the controls a lot more sensitive, so we've worked a lot on the animation side so that Conrad can do all the actions that you want at the time that you want. In the first game you had to press a button to draw your gun. In this one it's automatic, but you're able to draw your gun when you want – when you are running, walking, jumping – so we have worked a lot on the controls."

> "We had so many technical challengess, we lost a little bit of the spirit of the original game"
> PAUL CUISSET

It's obvious from our conversation with Paul that his new remake of *Flashback* is a clear labour of love and he's understandably concerned about "his baby" (as Kurt calls it) and how fans might react to it. "We are very afraid of how people will perceive the game, because it's very personal," explains Paul. "It's kind of a dream for game creators to be able to recreate the same game. I had a lot of frustrations in the first one because of the technical issues, and the timing, because it was quite a complicated project and to be able to retry the experience and make it better is quite a chance for me."

It's hard to say whether this new *Flashback* marks the beginning of a new saga, or is just a rare chance for a developer to simply come full circle with a cherished project, but it's clear that Paul has enjoyed making his new game as much as the original. It's equally clear just how important Conrad B Hart's first adventure was for him and gamers in general.



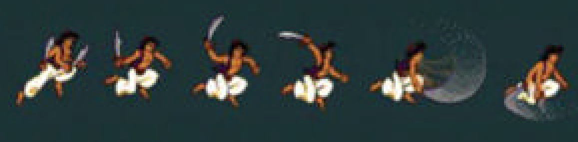
THE RUNNING MEN

We look at other 16-bit platformers that boast superb animation



CONRAD B HART

■ Paul Cuisset's sci-fi hero may have lost his memory, but he still remembers all his moves. He's amazingly athletic thanks to Paul and his team using rotoscoping and a higher capacity Mega Drive cartridge.



ALADDIN

■ David Perry and astonishing animation go hand-in-hand, so it's no surprise to learn that it's his creative team behind the superb animation for this excellent Disney platformer.



PRINCE OF PERSIA

■ *Prince Of Persia* is one of the earliest examples of rotoscoping being used in a videogame. The end result is fantastic, delivering amazingly slick animation that impressed all who saw it.



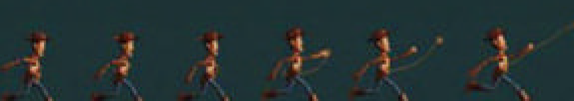
EARTHWORM JIM

■ Doug TenNapel's annelid hero remains one of the best animated sprites from the 16-bit period. Shiny Entertainment's trained artists gave him a life and energy that few other games could match.



BATMAN

■ *The Animated Adventures Of Batman And Robin* is a great take on *Gunstar Heroes*. It also happens to have the best animation of any early *Batman* game we've played, with Bats looking wonderful as he duffs up bad guys.



WOODY

■ More Disney, but a worthy addition to this list. *Toy Story* came out relatively late in the Mega Drive's life, meaning many missed out on it. It's a solid game with impressive visuals, but it's the superb animation that really stands out.

GREAT VIDEOGAME AMNESIACS

From early games like Hoshi Wo Miru Hito to more recent examples such as Remember Me, amnesia has been constantly used as an entertaining story mechanic. We take a look at some of the most memorable heroes with patchy pasts

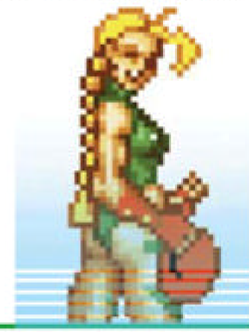
WARNING: CONTAINS SPOILERS!



CLOUD STRIFE

■ **AS SEEN IN:** FINAL FANTASY VII
■ 1997 ■ SQUARESOFT

Initially, Cloud is introduced as a likeable youth who's capable with a sword and clearly uses a hefty amount of gel in his hair. It is soon revealed that Cloud has a dark and murky past – a mixture of amnesia and sinister mind control. A lesson to would-be freedom fighters everywhere.



CAMMY

■ **AS SEEN IN:** SUPER STREET FIGHTER II: THE NEW CHALLENGERS
■ 1993 ■ CAPCOM

Part of a fictional MI6 task force, it's eventually revealed that Cammy was an agent working for M Bison who lost her memory. She can apparently still remember Kylie Minogue's painful portrayal of her in the god-awful movie though.



DANIEL

■ **AS SEEN IN:** AMNESIA: THE DARK DESCENT
■ 2010 ■ FRICTIONAL GAMES

Poor old Daniel's only memories are that he's from London and something horrible is after him. What follows is an insane rollercoaster of frights as he slowly unravels his horrific past and realises he's the cause of his current predicament.



LUCAS KANE

■ **AS SEEN IN:** FAHRENHEIT
■ 2005 ■ QUANTIC DREAM

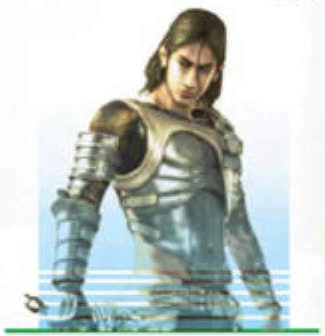
Lucas stars in one of gaming's most memorable openings, as Fahrenheit begins with him waking up with a bloody knife in-hand and a victim at his feet. With no idea what happened he goes on a quest to discover his past and clear his name.



BAYONETTA

■ **AS SEEN IN:** BAYONETTA
■ 2009 ■ PLATINUM GAMES

Bayonetta is an Umbra Witch with no idea of her past. Teaming up with a young child called Cereza, she eventually discovers that the young girl is actually a younger version of herself, sent forward in time so that Bayonetta would remember her past.



KAIM ARGONAR

■ **AS SEEN IN:** LOST ODYSSEY
■ 2007 ■ MISTWALKER, FEELPLUS

This ambitious RPG focuses on Kaim Argonar, a 1,000 year old immortal with no memory of his past. Interestingly, Kaim never fully remembers his past (although if we'd been knocking around for 1,000 years our memories would be hazy as well).



NILIN CARTIER-WELLS

■ **AS SEEN IN:** REMEMBER ME
■ 2013 ■ DONTNOD ENTERTAINMENT

Nilin is one of gaming's most recent amnesiacs. After narrowly escaping having her entire memory wiped at the start of the game, she soon learns from a mysterious individual called Edge that she's an Errorist, capable of stealing and remixing memories.



JAKE ARMITAGE

■ **AS SEEN IN:** SHADOWRUN
■ 1993 ■ BEAM SOFTWARE

The storyline of this fantastic SNES RPG sees its hero waking up on a slab after he gets gunned down during *Shadowrun*'s intro. He then proceeds to hack his way around town, eventually discovering that he's a data courier who has critical information locked within his brain.



SHADOW THE HEDGEHOG

■ **AS SEEN IN:** SONIC HEROES
■ 2004 ■ SEGA STUDIO USA

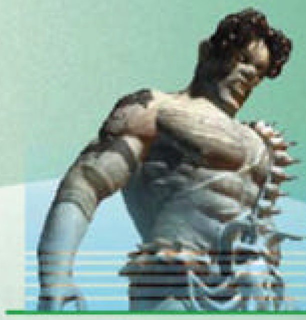
After mysteriously vanishing without a trace at the end of *Sonic Adventure 2*, our titular hero is presumed to be dead. He eventually turns up with amnesia in 2004's *Sonic Heroes*, but doesn't fully get his memory back on track until 2005's *Shadow The Hedgehog*.



JASON FLY

■ **AS SEEN IN:** XIII
■ 2003 ■ UBISOFT PARIS

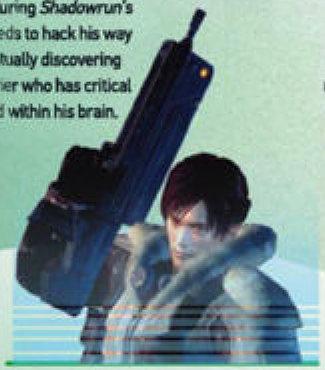
Jason Fly wakes up badly wounded with no recollection of his past and a key to a locker box his only possession. Oh and he somehow has the voice of David Duchovny. He soon finds himself embroiled in a shadowy conspiracy that is further resolved in a 2007 mobile only sequel.



THE NAMELESS ONE

■ **AS SEEN IN:** PLANESCAPE: TORMENT
■ 1999 ■ BLACK ISLE STUDIOS

Planescape: Torment features another amnesiac who wakes up on a mortuary slab. He soon finds himself on a quest to uncover his own mortality, surrounded by some of the most oddball characters to ever appear in a videogame.



WAYNE HOLDEN

■ **AS SEEN IN:** LOST PLANET: EXTREME CONDITION
■ 2006 ■ CAPCOM

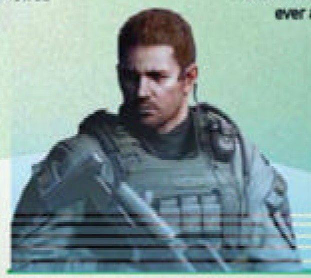
As well as having one of the most boring names of any videogame character, Wayne also suffers from amnesia. Fortunately, he does remember how to control a giant mech – rather handy considering the sheer amount of monsters he has to kill.



GILLIAN SEED

■ **AS SEEN IN:** SNATCHER
■ 1988 ■ KONAMI

Gillian is a futuristic gumshoe with a mysterious past in this superb game from Hideo Kojima. After waking up from cyrogenic sleep with only the word 'snatcher' to cling on to he soon joins the Junker organisation, hoping to discover his identity, which he eventually does.



CHRIS REDFIELD

■ **AS SEEN IN:** RESIDENT EVIL 6
■ 2012 ■ CAPCOM

The star of the *Resident Evil* franchise suffers from post-traumatic amnesia when he's first introduced in *Resident Evil 6*. While he's soon cleared for active duty, we reckon he's still suffering amnesia. How else could he allow himself to star in a game so divorced from his debut?

> "It's kind of a dream for game creators to be able to recreate the same game" PAUL CUISSET



FLASH FACTS

■ The new *Flashback* is created by VectorCell, the studio Paul co-owns with Lexis Numérique. It was founded in 2005.

A MOMENT WITH...

Jordan Mechner

Every issue, we put an industry legend in the hotseat. This month we met Jordan Mechner, creator of Karateka, Prince Of Persia and The Last Express



Who is Jordan Mechner?

In producing the beat-'em-up *Karateka*, which made use of a graphical technique called rotoscoping, Mechner's game-making career got off to a flying start. The Yale University graduate went on to even greater glory, however, when he single-handedly developed *Prince Of Persia*, starting a popular franchise that even caught the attention of Hollywood. Having also created *The Last Express* and gone over his back catalogue to convert them to current-day formats, he has recently completed work on the graphic novel *Templar.*

Which of your games would you recommend to our readers and why?
The Last Express and *Karateka Classic* because you can play them on mobile versions that are very faithful to the original experience. And *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time*, because it's the first and still my personal favourite of the modern console generation of *POP* games.

What is your proudest memory?
Going to Moscow for the *Prince Of Persia* movie premiere and meeting journalists who told me about playing *Prince Of Persia* in the early Nineties' Soviet era. I was amazed and moved to realise that my game had such a cultural impact, even behind the Iron Curtain, which was an unknown world to me as an American at that time.

What's the most difficult thing you've encountered while working on a game?
Running out of money close to the end of making *The Last Express* and having to call the team of 35 people together and tell them I wouldn't be able to meet payroll on Friday. We got through it, and were able to finish the game with the help of a few miracles, but that was a tough moment.

If you had to pick one, which industry veteran do you most admire?
Steve Wozniak who created the Apple II. To me he represents the idealism of the early personal computing days, a mindset that's all too rare today — when even young kids are dreaming about start-ups and IPOs and making fortunes, instead of about giving something to the world that will empower and inspire people.

How do you think you would like your games to be remembered?
As having elegance and integrity.

Which game do you wish that you'd made and why?
Tomb Raider in 1996. That was the giant leap that took 2D platform games like *Prince Of Persia* into real-time 3D and set the pattern for modern third-person action-adventures — so brilliant and obvious in retrospect, once they did it.

What's your darkest memory of being in the games industry?
During *The Last Express* when we ran into financial trouble. Everyone should run out of money at least once because that's when you find out who your real friends are.

And your best?
The Last Express, again. For the same reason. The darkest moments and the best are often neighbours, just as friendships forged in wartime are the most intense. Tied for first place is *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time* with Ubisoft. It was such a talented and passionate young team with so much to prove. We really felt like underdogs, and it felt fantastic not only to have the game turn out so well, but to be recognised and rewarded for it.

Can you share one interesting anecdote about your time in the industry?
One of the first fan letters I ever got was from a 17-year-old aspiring game designer in England about *Karateka*. I was all of 20, and still in college. Years later, I ran into John Romero in an elevator at GDC and he told me 'I wrote you a letter in 1985!' When I got home I dug out the letter and yep, it was from John. He said I'd written back to him, which I'm glad I did, otherwise I'd have been properly ashamed.

What are you doing next?
My next project is actually not a videogame, but an original graphic novel, *Templar.* It's a swashbuckling adventure about renegade knights in the 14th century, and it'll be out in July in the US. It's a big book, 480 pages hardcover. The artists did fantastic work; I'm really excited and can't wait for gamers to have the chance to discover it.

» [C64] *Karateka* was Jordan's first published game and proved an interesting take on the traditional fighting game.





» [PC] *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time* remains Jordan's favourite version of the later games.



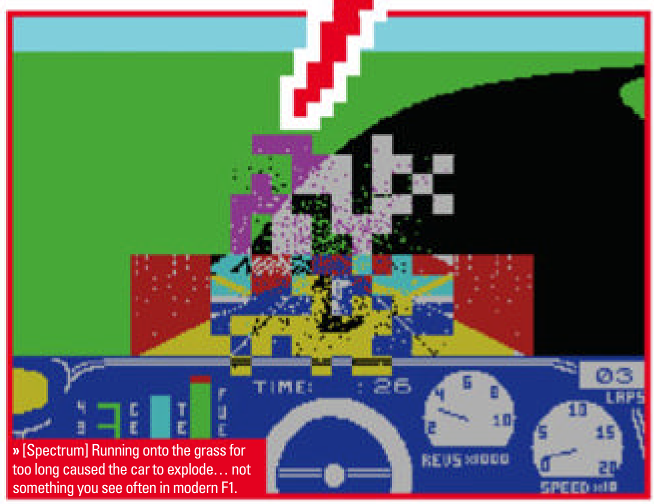
» [iOS] Jordan loves the fact that iOS is giving many of his older games a new lease of life.


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Chequered Flag

In the world of ZX Spectrum racers, there was one that left many others languishing in the pits. Ian Marks takes a look at the development of Psion's Chequered Flag



» [Spectrum] Running onto the grass for too long caused the car to explode… not something you see often in modern F1.

If you wanted to be Alain Prost, Nelson Piquet or even René Arnoux in the early Eighties without the million pound expense, or the ever present risk of a fiery explosion, then you had a couple of options. One was to play Namco's *Pole Position* in the arcades where your Formula One driver dreams could be acted out with a real steering wheel. If arcades were not your thing, then you could take the second option, which meant trying out some of the 8-bit racing games of the time. The problem was that these were often arcade racers, and lacked that element of simulation that certain gamers craved.

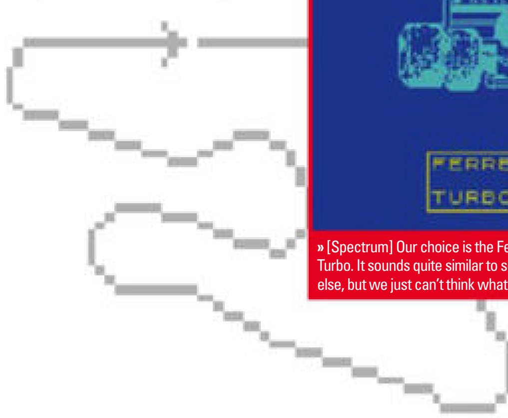
Psion though, had the answer, when it unleashed *Chequered Flag* on the ZX Spectrum world in 1983. *Chequered Flag* was not a top down racer, or even a third-person behind the car racer, instead it offered you a full in-cockpit view as you tore around real racing tracks like Silverstone.

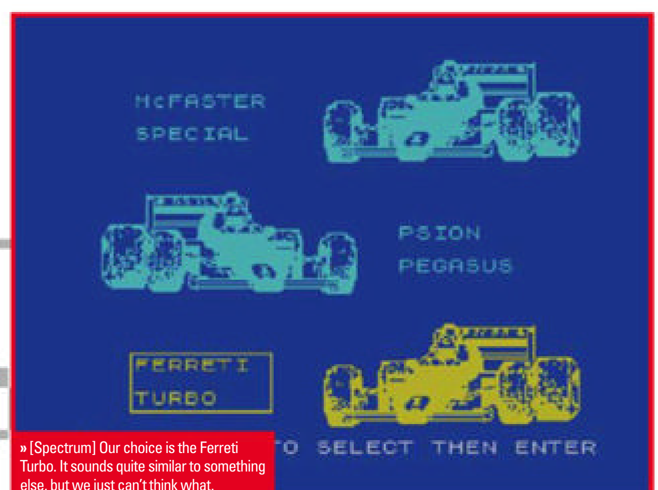
Psion was perhaps the biggest software developer for the ZX Spectrum at the time, helped in no minor part by its special relationship with Sinclair Research, allowing it to put the Sinclair logo on all of its titles. Previously, it was famous for adventure games such as *Inca Curse* and its clones of popular arcade games like *Space Raiders*. Psion also created the immensely detailed *Flight Simulator*, taking 8-bit gaming to a surprisingly sophisticated new level. By 1983 though, the prolific Psion team was ready to put its creative talents to work on a racing simulator.



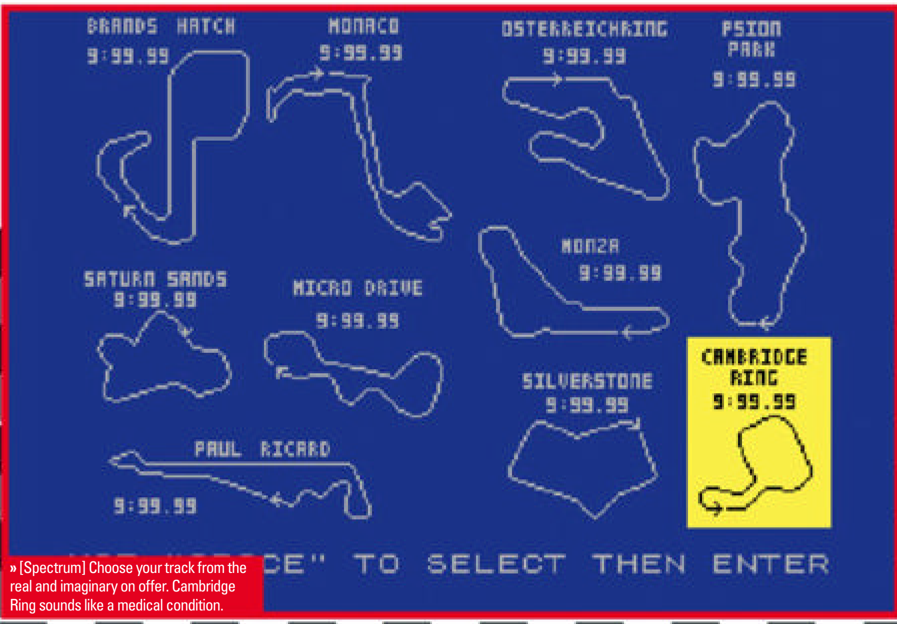
IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** PSION
- » **DEVELOPER:** STEPHEN KELLY, CECIL WARD, STEVE TOWNSEND
- » **RELEASED:** 1983
- » **GENRE:** RACING





» [Spectrum] Our choice is the Ferreti Turbo. It sounds quite similar to something else, but we just can't think what.



» [Spectrum] Choose your track from the real and imaginary on offer. Cambridge Ring sounds like a medical condition.

Developed by an in-house team of Stephen Kelly, Cecil Ward and Steve Townsend, *Chequered Flag* was pretty impressive for its time, with the dashboard view and the twisty, realistic track setting a new standard of detail and realism that many other Spectrum racers would struggle to follow.

Stephen Kelly, who did the majority of the coding for *Chequered Flag*, remembers where the idea originated, telling us, "In an era where most games were one man affairs, Psion were different. All games at Psion were a joint effort." Stephen would do most of the coding of the game engine, while Cecil Ward coded the sound and Steve Townsend the engine dynamics. "Even David Potter (the MD of Psion) got involved," recalls Stephen, revealing that David helped him to refine the coding for the track in the game.

Of course, the biggest challenge the team faced when creating *Chequered Flag* was the fact that the ZX Spectrum itself was not the most powerful computer in terms of graphics. "It was a bit of a challenge keeping the frame rate high," admits Stephen. "Racing games need a fast and constant frame-rate. I think *Chequered Flag* still 'chugs' a bit when going round corners but all in all it wasn't a bad effort."

The sound also created a problem for the team, mainly due to the Spectrum being famously limited in that particular department. "I think it was tricky to implement the sound as it needed a consistent portion of time to generate the engine noises," recollects Stephen about the technical details. "As I remember, Cecil came up with a solution, interlacing the sound routines with the screen refresh. I can't quite recall the actual technique though."

What first strikes you about *Chequered Flag* when you play the game is the sheer detail of the cockpit. There is a rev counter, a speedometer, gear selector, fuel, temperature gauges as well as wing mirrors and a clock. Nothing like this had ever been seen on the ZX Spectrum before. However Stephen remembers that this was actually one of the easiest parts of writing the game. "The cockpit itself wasn't that difficult as it was static," he reveals. "It was a simple case of aligning the elements onto the 8-bit pixel boundaries". He does however have one issue with the cockpit view: "Some of the cockpits are seriously gaudy," he remembers. "Who the hell chose red?!"

Chequered Flag was always planned as a cockpit view game. Stephen and the team felt that this led to a more immersive view, and would really help with the idea of having a time trial inside a racing car. It also created an added bonus that made coding the game easier. "It had a nice side effect of cutting down the number of scan lines we had to calculate for the display of the track," explains Stephen. The end result was that *Chequered Flag* was a lot faster to play.

Psion's game wasn't without its issues however, with the lack of cars to race against being an issue for some gamers. It's effectively a time trial, allowing you to clock up a time and then try and better it on your next lap. We asked Stephen if there was ever any thought about putting in other cars to race against, as it seemed like a strange omission. "I think, given the time ▶

GOING FOR POLE POSITION

Namco's 1982 game *Pole Position* is the racer that inspired a generation of people to try and write their own racing games, for both arcades and home computers. When first experienced in an arcade it was a truly awesome experience, being a game that featured an accurate looking racing car on a realistic track, controlled by real pedals and a steering wheel.

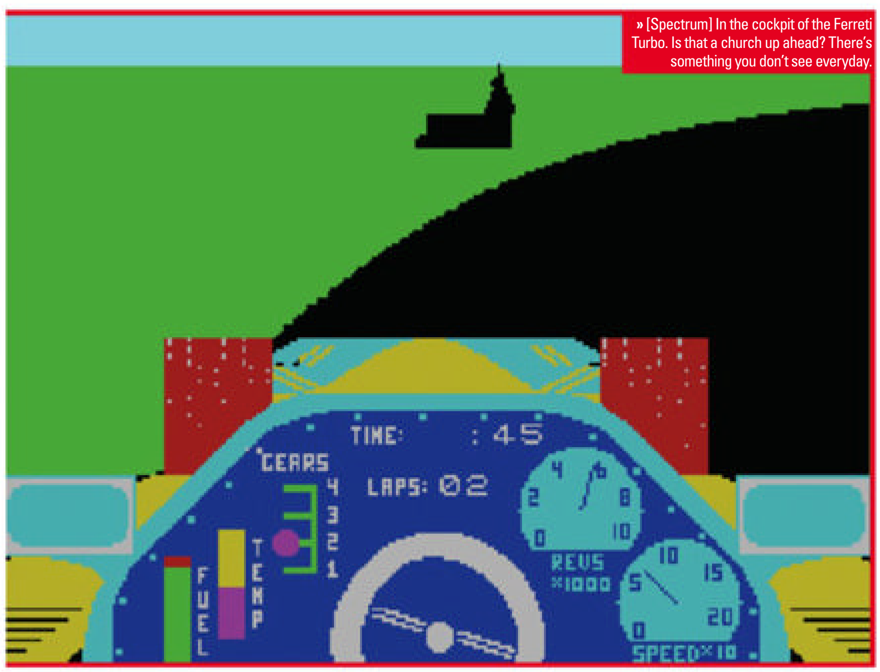
Steve Kelly says of *Pole Position* that "It really was the game that changed everything. It was without doubt the most important racing game ever made." And he's probably not exaggerating.

It still plays well, and the thrill of racing around the Fuji Speedway remains as fresh as ever. Even more fun can be had in spotting the roadsigns advertising *Centipede* and *Dig Dug* that dangerously litter the track. Health and Safety would have a field day. Play it today on *Namco Museum*.

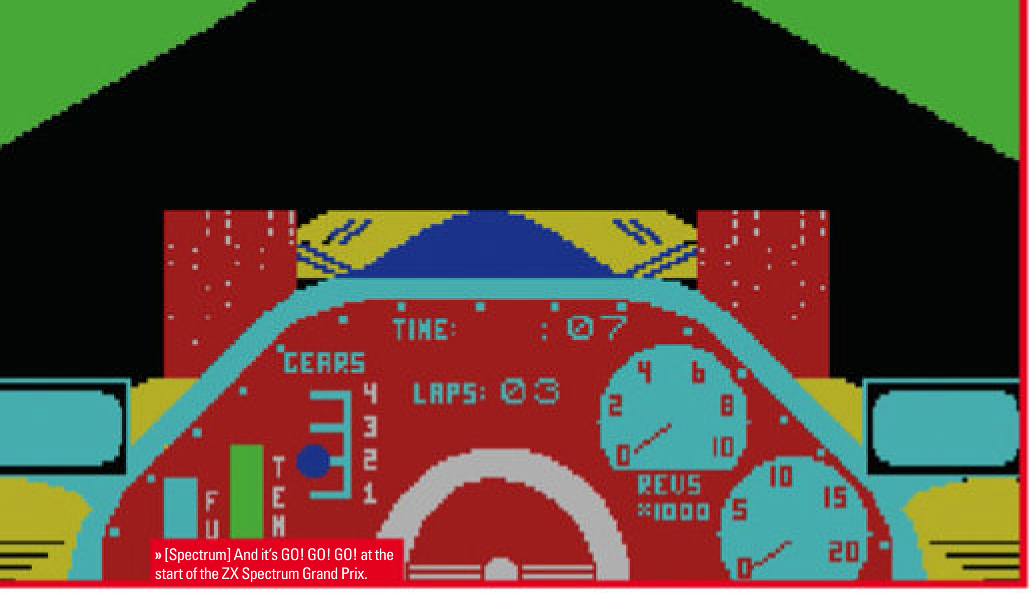


"Some of the cockpits are seriously gaudy - who the hell chose red?!"

STEPHEN KELLY



» [Spectrum] In the cockpit of the Ferreti Turbo. Is that a church up ahead? There's something you don't see everyday.



» [Spectrum] And it's GO! GO! GO! at the start of the ZX Spectrum Grand Prix.

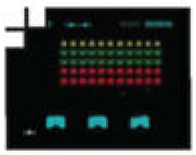
and effort, we could have found a solution to the problem of not racing against other cars," he reveals to us. "I think the initial decision was down to worries about the processor speed and worries about how you could display other cars on the track given the Spectrum's attribute problems. As development progressed I did want to include other cars, but there were real pressures to get the game finished". While it's tempting to think of what could have been if there had been other people to actually race against, it's still important to remember just how revolutionary *Chequered Flag* was as a Spectrum racer, and to enjoy haring around the circuits trying to better your time by a second.

Talking of the circuits, *Chequered Flag* had a mixture of both real and imagined circuits to race on. In a modern age where game franchises such as *Gran Turismo* make great strides to be mathematically and geographically accurate representations of circuits, we were keen to find out how Psion approached the problem. Stephen's answer might surprise some: "A poster of famous racing tracks and a ruler!" he states, before offering a bit more detail. "We would photocopy and enlarge a plan of the track, break it down into small pieces – as if it was to be made out of Scalextric track – and represent each section mathematically in the game code." As well as these real circuits there were some made-up ones too, with Sinclair-related names such as Cambridge Ring, Micro Drive and Psion Park. How did the team go about creating these? "I think a couple of us sat down and let our imaginations run wild," continues Stephen. "We had an F1 fanatic in the office (Luigi) and an avid karter (Steve Townsend) so there was no shortage of volunteers."

There were also three different cars to choose from in the game, each with its own cockpit design and minor differences. We asked Stephen what these differences amounted to. "Man alive, I can't remember that! Although I think they had slightly different acceleration and braking attributes." In any case it does not matter, because the Psion Pegasus is clearly the best car, having the nicest cockpit view as well.

Added to the difficulty of actually driving round the track fast and without going off and exploding was the fact that someone had carelessly left rocks, glass and oil all over the track. Oil simply made you skid a little bit, but rocks and glass had a far more serious effect on your vehicle. Run over glass for example and one of your tyres would burst, leaving your car with a large amount of vibration. The only way to rectify this was a trip to the pits. By stopping off at the pits – something even *Pole Position* didn't have – you could have repairs done to your car, although it did cost you precious time. It's these sort of revolutionary features that really made *Chequered Flag* a trend setter in the 8-bit racing world.

The actual coding of the game was not done on the Sinclair Spectrum itself, but rather on mini computers. "Psion had just installed their VAX-11/750 mini computer at Huntsworth Mews NW1 by that time," explains Stephen. "It was a beast of a machine that had pride of place in the office in its own air conditioned room. The VAX had all the editors, assemblers and compilers we needed, so all the development work was done on consoles connected to

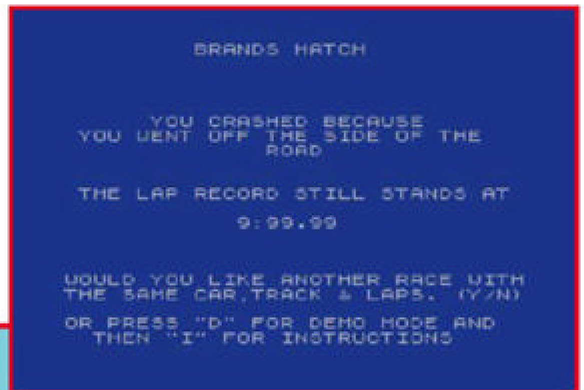


DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

SPACE RAIDERS
SYSTEM: ZX81/ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1981/1982

MATCH POINT
SYSTEM: ZX SPECTRUM/MSX
YEAR: 1984

FLIGHT SIMULATOR
SYSTEM: ZX81/ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1981/1982





» [Spectrum] In the Psion Pegasus here, about to run over some glass. The marshals really aren't doing their work properly.



» [iOS] Using the iOS App ZXEC from Elite you can experience the glories of *Chequered Flag* on your phone.



the mini computer." When it comes to the process of getting the code across from the VAX to the ZX Spectrum, Stephen admits that time has meant his memory is not what it was, telling us: "I am a bit hazy about how we got the machine code onto the Spectrum. In the early days we developed on a TRS-80 that would transfer data to the Spectrum at the flick of a switch, so I imagine it was something like that. Whatever we used, it was a far cry from saving and loading on audio cassettes."

With the coding finished, *Chequered Flag* was released to the world in 1983 to generally good reviews from the gaming press. "The reviews were all pretty positive as I remember – although I have a tendency to forget the bad ones. About a year after release one magazine got an actual F1 driver to play lots of driving games and pass verdict on each one. *Chequered Flag* came out pretty well, with his only qualm being how poor the Spectrum keyboard was!"

The good reviews led to large sales of the game – something that also pleased Stephen. "Put it this way, I wouldn't have minded a small royalty! The game sold serious quantities and went into an awful lot of Spectrum compilations," he tells us. Stephen also recalls that *Chequered Flag* did have some competition on release. "I think about three or four other racing games came out within weeks of the release of *Chequered Flag*," he recalls. "A couple of them were very good, but with Psion's relationship with Sinclair we were always favourites to come out on top."

So did these good sales ever tempt Stephen and Psion into creating a sequel?

"No, onwards and upwards," answers Stephen. "Psion themselves didn't do sequels – there was the *Horace* series but they were produced out of house. In the Eighties there were so many other genres that hadn't been done before – to have a try at a sequel wasn't considered."

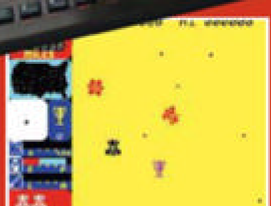
Chequered Flag was a huge leap forward in ZX Spectrum racing and, while Stephen acknowledges that given a bit more time it could have been an even better game, it is still great fun to play.

Finally, we ask Stephen if there is any chance of an iOS update of his game. "Certainly not from me! But I'm sure there is demand somewhere for updated ZX Spectrum games."

He's not wrong there, and while there isn't an updated version for iOS, you can play the original *Chequered Flag* on your iPhone or iPad if you have Elite's ZXEC App, which has the game as a downloadable purchase. It actually plays very well with touch screen controls, and you begin to realise just how sensitive the steering was on the three vehicles on offer. *Chequered Flag* is not an easy drive, but once you begin to master the finery of the controls, you really can begin to set those spectacular lap times.

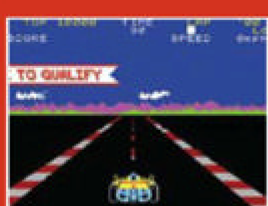


ON THE STARTING GRID Five other impressive Spectrum driving games



TRANS AM (1983)

■ Not strictly a racer in the truest sense of the word, being from a top-down perspective. However, in this car game from Ultimate you could race other cars across the whole of the USA to capture cups. It was a pretty fast car too, only taking 30 seconds or so to traverse the whole width of North America.



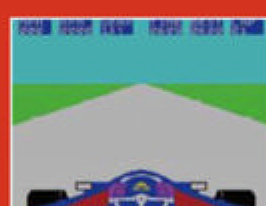
POLE POSITION (1984)

■ Coming a little bit late to the party, being released two years after it had hit the arcades, Atari's *Pole Position* on the ZX Spectrum is a pretty good attempt at recreating the experience. The familiar behind the car view is there, as are many of the colours and side of the road items. It's a little bit creaky as a racer though.



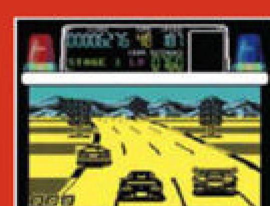
FULL THROTTLE (1984)

■ Micromega's *Full Throttle* swapped cars for motorbikes, but kept a real sense of speed. The track twists and turns beautifully, and you genuinely feel like you are competing in a really important race against 40 other riders. It has a little bit of flicker, but that can be easily forgiven in a game this good.



FORMULA ONE (1984)

■ It looks a little like a budget version of Chequered Flag, and in essence it is. Retaining a cockpit view was wise, but the track just does not move as smoothly and the car is difficult to control. However, as one of the few first-person racers on the Spectrum, its efforts deserve to be recognised here.



CHASE HQ (1989)

■ Ocean's *Chase HQ* is one of the best driving games on the humble Sinclair machine. It was a seemingly impossible task to translate the flashy arcade game to 8-bit but it has been handled with skill. There is a real feeling of speed and excitement that is lacking in many contemporary Spectrum games.



SHOOT TO THRILL!

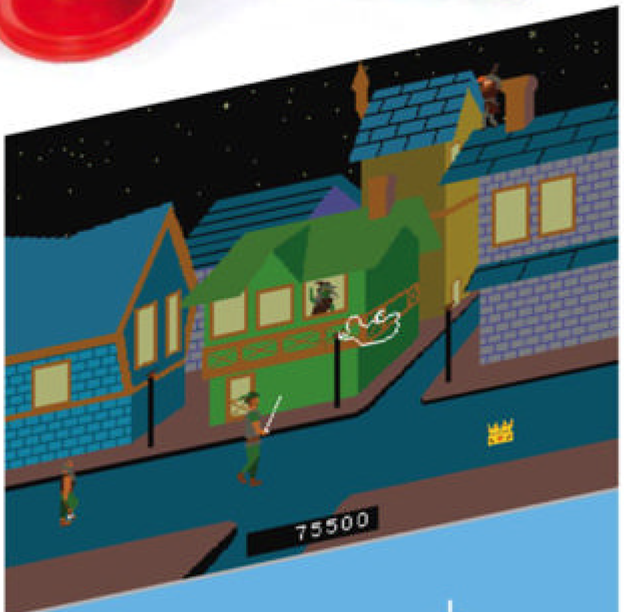
THE BLUFFER'S GUIDE TO LIGHTGUN GAMES



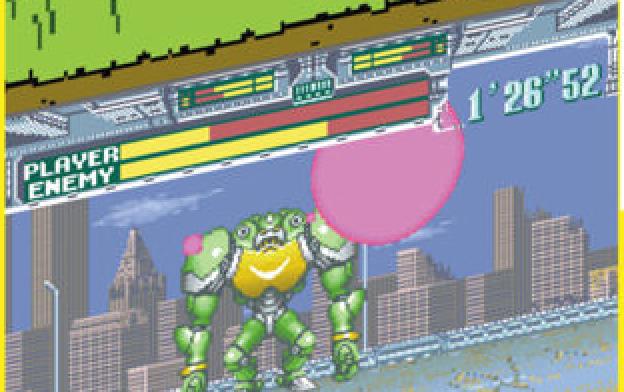


FROM DUCKS TO GUNSLINGERS, KILLER CYBORGS AND ARMIES OF THE UNDEAD, THE THRILL OF THE COMPUTER-GENERATED SHOOTING RANGE HAS, IT SEEMS, REMAINED UNDIMINISHED. MIKE BEVAN LOOKS AT THE HISTORY OF ONE OF VIDEOGAMING'S MOST SUCCESSFUL SUB-GENRES

Interactive gun games have been around for decades in one form or another. Our more mature readers might recall mechanical amusements involving sinking battleships or harpooning sharks, or the Western-themed rifle ranges that were a common feature of pier-top arcades and Eighties theme parks. The act of physically aiming and squeezing the trigger on a virtual target has a tactile appeal that separates lightgun shooters from other combat-oriented videogames and, as the technology has improved, they've evolved from blasting archaic white dots to playing peace-keeping cops, Rambo-style freedom-fighters, big game hunters or the last hope against the zombie apocalypse. But it all started with a primitive rifle shooting game and a mechanical duck…







In 1936, a jukebox company called Seeburg produced the Ray-O-Lite, the world's first light-activated shooting game. It featured a rail-mounted 'flying' duck equipped with a sensor that would register hits from a light-emitting rifle. A hit on the duck made it fall. The principle of using a light beam to detect where a player was aiming soon became common in amusement arcades, with notable mechanical shooting games like Sega's *Periscope* and *Killer Shark* in the late Sixties and early Seventies. With the onset of electronic videogames, it was a natural progression to apply the idea to an on-screen target and, of course, one of the pioneers was the remarkable Ralph Baer.

In the late Sixties, Ralph had been working on the Brown Box project, a prototype of what would become the Magnavox Odyssey – the first commercial home videogaming system. "It became immediately obvious to me when we had one spot on the screen that we could shoot at with a gun that had simple electronics," Ralph remembers. After experimenting with an optical gun for the Brown Box, he designed the first commercial lightgun, the *Shooting Gallery* hardware/game combo for the Odyssey in 1972. This consisted of a hunting rifle-shaped peripheral and four simple games, which used paper overlays that were placed over the glowing targets on the screen.

While previous arcade shooting titles had used targets equipped with light sensors, Ralph's optical gun was different – it used a sensor placed in the gun barrel itself. This meant that the gun could register hits from other luminous objects, such as a light bulb. It seems that Ralph wasn't too concerned about this capacity to cheat the game. "We couldn't care less, as long as it worked just fine when aimed at a bright target spot on a dark TV screen," he chuckles, "and that it did."

Over in Japan, a fresh-faced toy designer by the name of Gunpei Yokoi had been working on several electro-mechanical projects for Nintendo. Fascinated with the idea of shooting games, he had created the Nintendo Beam Gun, a cheap lightgun toy that included a set of targets fitted with solar cells of the same type found in pocket calculators. Applying similar technology to the arcade, in 1974 he designed *Wild Gunman*, a target shooting game consisting of a lightgun hooked up to a 16 millimetre projection screen that displayed pre-recorded footage of gun-slinging actors. Players had to out-draw, and out-shoot, their on-screen opponent in a simulated Wild West duel.

"WITH THE ACCURATE GUN, WE COULD ALLOW FOR VERY ACCURATE AIMING"
LARRY HUTCHERSON

Gunpei's influence on the world of lightgun games would turn out to be massive, but more on that later. On the home front, the Seventies' glut of *Pong*-inspired videogame consoles like the UK's Grandstand and Binatone TV Master turned bouncing squares into targets for pack-in lightguns, becoming big commercial successes. But, when these monochrome platforms were superseded by the colour Atari VCS and Intellivision, home target shooting games had fallen out of favour. The new systems launched without lightgun peripheral support, and the arcade was again the only place to find new and exciting games using the technology.

One company that jumped on the arcade lightgun bandwagon at the start of the Eighties was the American manufacturer Exidy. Launched in 1983, *Crossbow* was the first ▶

WEAPON OF CHOICE

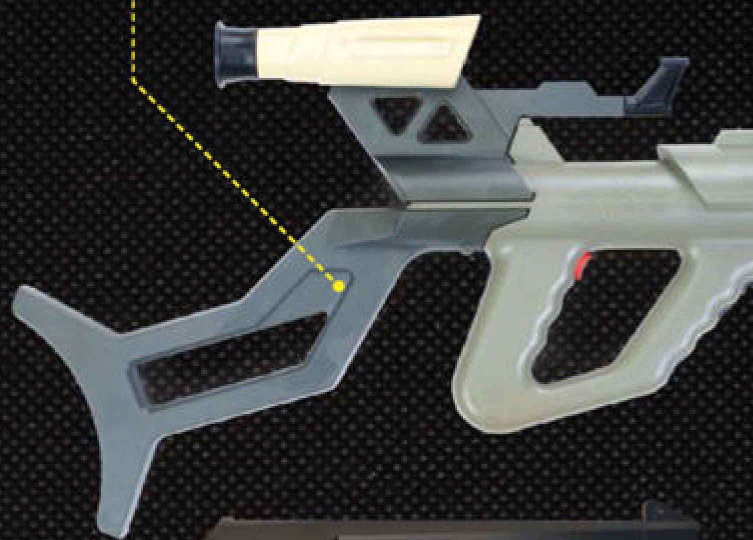
Your guide to some of the best lightguns around



GUNCON

NOTABLE GAMES: TIME CRISIS, ELEMENTAL GEARBOLT, POINT BLANK

By far the best lightgun available for the Sony PlayStation, the original GunCon (or G-Con 45 as it was known in Europe) was bundled with Namco's excellent port of *Time Crisis*. The GunCon had a sleek, handsome design and satisfyingly weighty feel. Most importantly, it was responsive and highly accurate, making use of an auxiliary cable that supplied an additional video signal from the TV directly to the console.



SEGA MENACER

NOTABLE GAMES: T2: THE ARCADE GAME, SNATCHER, MAD DOG MCCREE

The Menacer was Sega's weapon of choice for the Mega Drive and could be used with compatible Sega CD titles like *Snatcher* and *Mad Dog McCree*. Like the Super Scope, the Menacer used a separate infrared receiver that plugged into the console and was placed on or near the TV. It consisted of three sections: a shoulder stock, pistol barrel and twin sight. These could be assembled in an Ikea-like fashion as desired.



NES ZAPPER

NOTABLE GAMES: DUCK HUNT, HOGAN'S ALLEY, WILD GUNMAN

Possibly the most popular lightgun accessory of all time, the Zapper was styled like a futuristic pistol. Originally grey to match the NES console, it later adopted the familiar orange and white colour-scheme. In the West, the Zapper was often bundled and sold with *Duck Hunt*. However, the Japanese version – the Family Computer Beam Gun – was similar to a Western six-shooter, and distributed as a package with *Wild Gunman*.





SEGA LIGHT PHASER

NOTABLE GAMES: GANGSTER TOWN, SPACE GUN, OPERATION WOLF

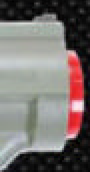
Released for the Master System, in reply to the success of the Zapper, Sega's light pistol was similar in appearance but was slightly more advanced. Unlike the Zapper, which simply sensed blocky white squares superimposed over the on-screen targets when the trigger was pulled, Light Phaser games used a more precise scanline detection method which allowed greater accuracy in titles like *Operation Wolf*.

NINTENDO SUPER SCOPE

NOTABLE GAMES: BATTLE CLASH, YOSHI'S SAFARI, TIN STAR

The Super Scope's design has been rightly criticised over the years, and Nintendo's decision to make a two-foot long lightgun that could only be comfortably used in an over-the-shoulder stance was odd to say the least. Using an external infrared receiver that plugged into the SNES, the Super Scope was surprisingly effective, particularly when aimed with the mounted U-shaped sight that clipped onto the oversized barrel.







DREAMCAST LIGHTGUN

NOTABLE GAMES: THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2, CONFIDENTIAL MISSION

Sega's official Dreamcast lightgun was released in Europe and Asia to support the company's near-flawless conversion of *The House Of The Dead 2.* Chunkier than the GunCon, it had a rear VMU save slot and futuristic styling. Sadly, in the wake the Columbine tragedy, the device was never marketed in North America. A third-party add-on, the similarly-shaped Dream Blaster, was later produced by Mad Katz.

VIRTUA GUN

NOTABLE GAMES: VIRTUA COP, VIRTUA COP 2, THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

Known as the Sega Stunner in North America, the Virtua Gun was the official lightgun peripheral for the Sega Saturn. Needless to say, it was designed with conversions of the popular *Virtua Cop* games in mind. Although not as precise as the GunCon, it was more than serviceable when playing the splendid *Virtua Cop 2* or *The House Of The Dead*, two high-profile titles with which it was later bundled for sale in Europe.



WII ZAPPER

NOTABLE GAMES: GHOST SQUAD, THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD OVERKILL

Nintendo revived the Zapper brand-name with this add-on, which is effectively just a pistol-shaped housing for the Wii Remote. Initially released as a pack-in for the Wii version of *Ghost Squad*, the Zapper provides a more realistic experience and allows for a steadier aim than using the Wii Remote alone. The bulging library of compatible shooting games on Nintendo's white box makes the Wii Zapper a must-have gadget.



© Paul Drury

» Ralph Baer shows off his Brown Box prototype and various experimental lightguns.



of several state-of-the-art lightgun games from the Californian developer. The game's fantasy setting, detailed graphics and, most of all, the large crossbow-shaped gun mounted on its cabinet, were a big draw for arcade-goers. It was one of the first examples of a semi-realistic lightgun videogame with human – or sometimes not so human – characters.

"I remember working with Howell Ivy to get the lightgun to work," recalls Exidy programmer Larry Hutcherson. "He developed the optics and electronics and I wrote the code to determine where the gun was aiming on the screen. We were keen to have a gun that was highly accurate, and that took a little extra hardware and programming effort. With the accurate gun, we could allow for very accurate aiming. That led to wanting to shoot at relatively small items, where your ability was defined by how quickly you could aim and shoot. In other words, we opted for shot accuracy."

"Many of my college evenings and weekends were (mis)spent with *Dungeons & Dragons* and an early Apple II game called *Wizardry*," reminisces *Crossbow*'s graphic artist Ken Nicholson. "If there are *D&D* elements in the game, I'm sure I was one of the more vocal proponents. I relentlessly lobbied for a magician to appear and throw a fireball, pushed for a floating eye similar to the *D&D* monster called a Beholder, and pushed for having elf and dwarf characters. The idea of protecting party members came up in a game design meeting and we decided to try it, but it made much more sense later in development when we considered it as a way for good players to earn more lives."

> "I RELENTLESSLY LOBBIED FOR A MAGICIAN TO APPEAR AND THROW A FIREBALL"
> KEN NICHOLSON



» [Arcade] *Crossbow* was an exceptional looking game for its time.

Back across the Pacific, Gunpei Yokoi had worked his way up to heading Nintendo's internal development division on the back of the success of his popular Game & Watch line. He was about to help launch what would become the first mainstream home lightgun. The so-called Beam Gun, released in Japan for Nintendo's Famicom console, would be re-branded for Western audiences as the NES Zapper. Owing its design more to a *Star Wars* blaster than anything on the local rifle range, the Zapper came bundled with a g ame called *Duck Hunt*, which would wind up as one of the most famous of Yokoi's creations. Although effectively little more than an updated version of the old black-and-white 'skeet shooting' TV games, *Duck Hunt*'s appealing graphics and sniggering hunting dog pal hit a chord and helped sell plenty of Zappers. The NES became the first console to have a proper lightgun game library, with titles including an updated version of Yokoi's *Wild Gunman*, police target shooting sim *Hogan's Alley* and an unofficial version of Exidy's gory arcade release *Chiller.*

Not to be outdone, Sega developed its own Light Phaser in time for the North American launch of its Master System console in 1986, and Atari followed suit with the XG-1 lightgun in 1987. Atari's peripheral was designed primarily for the 7800 and XEGS consoles and games like *Alien Brigade* and *Barnyard Blaster*, but could also be used with the Atari 2600. However, only one compatible title, *Sentinel*, was ever released.

On the Master System, support for the Light Phaser was limited to simple shooting galleries like *Safari Hunt* and *Marksman/Trap Shooting* but, in the arcades, Taito was unleashing a spectacular military shoot-'em-up that would take the system by storm.



» [Arcade] *Operation Wolf*, probably the most famous of all Eighties shooting games.

▶ *Operation Wolf*, with its cabinet-mounted Uzi-style gun controller, was the interactive equivalent of watching Stallone battle the entire Vietnamese army in *Rambo II*, and the most spectacular game of its type so far. Although the original game used a positional gun rather than an optical targeting system, full support for the Light Phaser and better graphics than its NES counterpart meant that the Master System port was the most impressive home version of the arcade hit.

The '*Operation Wolf* effect' also spread to the current home computers, popularising lightgun games on systems like the Spectrum and Commodore 64. Ocean Software's home ports were huge sellers, despite being released without support for a lightgun peripheral at first. "The player's 'target' was placed in the cross-hairs by joystick and fired," explains Colin Porch, who coded the C64 version. "I remember that we deliberately put a degree of spread into where the bullets went, since it didn't look right if each one followed exactly the same path as the previous one."

The lack of lightgun support was solved with the arrival of the Magnum Light Phaser, manufactured by Amstrad. Versions of the Magnum were sold for the C64, Spectrum and Amstrad CPC, and included a games bundle with the newly compatible re-release of *Operation Wolf*, as well as five other titles including the Spectrum-exclusive *Bullseye*, based on the popular dart-lobbing TV quiz.

"WE KNEW WE HAD A HIT WHEN REPORTS CAME BACK THAT MALL SECURITY HAD TO KEEP MOVING PEOPLE ALONG"
PIERRE MALOKA



The next generation of lightguns were influenced by a US law change restricting the sale of realistic gun toys, the most famous of which was the Super Scope for the SNES. Ironically, this was styled after a potentially deadlier weapon, taking the form of a futuristic shoulder-mounted bazooka – fine for battling giant robots in *Battle Clash* but seemingly overkill for a cute and cuddly title like *Yoshi's Safari*. The Sega Mega Drive had a similarly space-age looking gadget, the Menacer, although few compatible games were released. The unwieldy nature of both accessories, coupled with the need for separate batteries – which, in the case of the Super Scope, were eaten up surprisingly quickly – made for a rather indifferent reception from gamers.

Several arcade conversions helped ease the pain of adopters, such as *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (released for both platforms as *T2: The Arcade Game*) and Taito's shooter sequel *Operation Thunderbolt* on the SNES. In its arcade incarnation, *Terminator 2* was another title that used a potentiometer based fixed gun system to give the impression of aiming at on-screen targets – in this case, the terrifying metallic cyborgs from Arnie's movie sequel. This intense shooter was one of the first of its kind to use digitised graphics, similar to those in other Midway arcade games like *Mortal Kombat* and *NBA Jam*.

"Despite the movie tie-in, it didn't seem like a big-budget game," recalls co-designer Warren Davis. "The resources we had were pretty much the same as any other. Memory was tight, and we had to work within the graphical limitations of the hardware. Luckily, we developed this game on hardware that supported 256 colours, which allowed us to get very close to photo-realistic graphics. The team also had very detailed videos of some of the sets and had been given access to Robert Patrick and Eddie Furlong, who were digitised for the game using a program I'd developed for Narc. Linda Hamilton and Arnold Schwarzenegger's stunt doubles were also used."

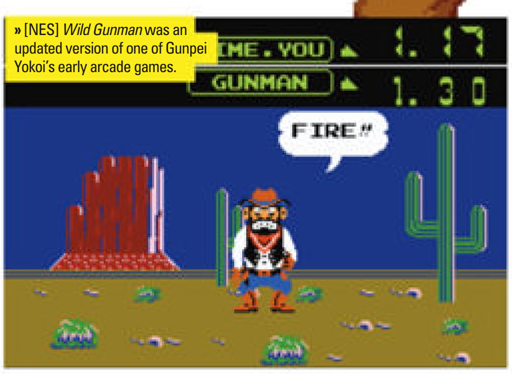
The third-party Trojan Light Phazer supported the Amiga and Atari ST, although only a handful of titles – such as Ocean's port of *Space Gun* –could be played using the device. Another company that produced an Amiga lightgun was the Illinois-based Actionware, which also created four compatible games, *POW Sideshow*, *Creature* and *Capone*. The coder of three of these Actionware titles was Pierre Maloka, who went on to design several LaserDisc lightgun arcade games, the first of which was *Mad Dog McCree*.

"Believe it or not, the origins were really simple," says Pierre when we ask about inspiration behind *Mad Dog*, which used live-action footage to create an interactive Hollywood-style Western. "Give people the chance to be the good guy with a gun." It might surprise some to learn the secret of the hardware behind this cinematic arcade experience, Pierre having foregone a much more expensive alternative when he joined American Laser Games. "I did a bit of research and realised that the Amiga, with a lightgun and LaserDisc, could do the same thing for a fraction of the cost," he tells us. "Once I created an editor for laser games, I could control the LaserDisc with one hand and draw target zones with the other. I had it to the point that I could get a master disc from 3M in the morning and have a playable game by the end of the next day."

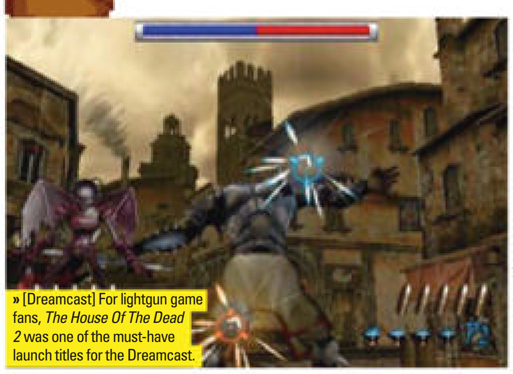
Although LaserDisc games are generally frowned upon nowadays for their linearity, the on-rails nature of lightgun titles meant that using a pre-recorded cowboy movie with belly-flopping actors was a perfect fit. Indeed, *Mad Dog McCree* caused quite a stir when it was first tested on the public. "Our first test location was in an arcade in a mall in Texas," says Pierre. "We knew we had a hit when reports came back that mall security had to keep people moving along… they were blocking the way."

If playing a Wild West gunslinger wasn't to your liking, playing a crime-busting cop in *Lethal Enforcers* might have been more your cup of tea. Konami also created the Justifier, a Magnum-style lightgun that SNES and Mega Drive owners could use with the home versions of the game, allowing gamers to become a virtual Dirty Harry and ditch the cumbersome Super Scope or Menacer. The police theme resurfaced rather spectacularly in Sega's *Virtua Cop*, which introduced 3D polygon graphics and the zooming target reticule system that would influence many later lightgun games.

Virtua Cop's success meant that it was quickly ported to Sega's new console, the Saturn, and bundled with the Virtua Gun lightgun peripheral. It was the first of a number of Saturn lightgun arcade conversions, including *The House Of The Dead*, *Area 51*, and the superb *Virtua Cop 2*. *Area 51* was one of Atari's only entrants into the now crowded arcade lightgun market, along with the sequel *Maximum Force*. "I acquired arcade versions of *Lethal Enforcers*, *Revolution X*, and



» [NES] *Wild Gunman* was an updated version of one of Gunpei Yokoi's early arcade games.



» [Dreamcast] For lightgun game fans, *The House Of The Dead 2* was one of the must-have launch titles for the Dreamcast.



Terminator 2: Judgment Day, which were the top-earning games at that time," remembers lead designer Robert Weatherby, describing his preparation for working on the game. "I was most inspired by the photo-realism of *Lethal Enforcers*. One day, an employee brought the *Popular Science* magazine into work and set it on his desk. I picked it up out of curiosity and started reading the article about the secret air base at Groom Lake. As I read the article, the entire game design unfolded before me – a secret military base, government cover-up, aliens infecting the human personnel and taking over."

Another classic Saturn lightgun title was initially developed with the Sony PlayStation in mind, and inspired by Sega's seminal police shooter.

"I had played *Virtua Cop* and thought it was fantastic," declares coder Simon Pick, "so I was looking for an opportunity to make my own version. *Die Hard Trilogy*'s development started before the PlayStation had been announced and we didn't know if a lightgun would be available. For the first few months of the game's development it was a controller and mouse based game. A light-gun only turned up midway through development, so I had to retrofit it into the mouse-driven code."

"The second challenge was the 'screen flash'. A lightgun doesn't work if you point it at a dark section of the screen, so many games at the time would draw a white screen every time the trigger was pulled. I found this flashing very annoying so was keen to eliminate it. After some R&D I ended up with a solution where when the trigger was pressed the light-gun tried to determine it's on-screen position, and if the player was pointing it at something bright it worked, with no need to flash the screen."

The PlayStation's most well-known lightgun peripheral was the iconic GunCon, launched by Namco to support its conversion of *Time Crisis*, although it came too late to be compatible with *Die Hard Trilogy*. Billed as the most accurate lightgun ever, it helped bolster the PlayStation's library with exclusive titles like *Point Blank* and *Resident Evil: Survivor*. Versions of the GunCon would be produced for all Sony's future consoles, culminating in the PS3's GunCon 3, which used infrared LED sensors rather than relying on scanline hit detection like past models had.

The mid-to-late Nineties was a golden period for lightgun games, as console technology finally caught up with arcade visuals. This allowed near-perfect home versions of standout titles – like *The House Of The Dead 2* and *Confidential Mission* on the Dreamcast, and *Time Crisis 2* on the PlayStation 2 – that often featured cool extras.

Admittedly, during the last generation of consoles, support for the genre has been mixed. The original Xbox had only one true lightgun supported game, *The House Of The Dead III*, the PS3 had little to show apart from *Time Crisis 4*, and the GameCube and Xbox 360 didn't even get a lightgun accessory. The advent of LCD flat-screen televisions has also meant that the technology no longer works with older consoles and optical-sensing peripherals.

Nowadays, the Nintendo Wii's hand-held motion controller and Wii Zapper have become the gadgets of choice for many developers, along with third-party lightgun-style add-ons. Newer games like *The House Of The Dead: Overkill*, *Ghost Squad*, and *Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles*, as well as nostalgic ports of older titles like *Gunblade NY* and *Mad Dog McCree* have re-introduced players to the thrills of physical target-shooters. For those that grew up on *Duck Hunt*, *Operation Wolf* and *Virtua Cop*, perhaps a whole new era of interactive lightgun-style shooters awaits.



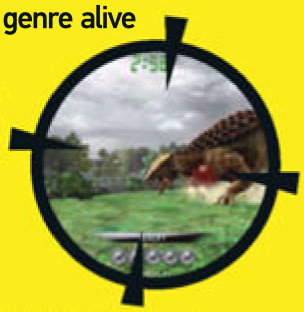
» [Wii] *Ghost Squad* – Sega created a fantastic conversion, improving an already great arcade game.



GUNNER'S HEAVEN

Five games keeping the lightgun genre alive

PRIMEVAL HUNT (2005)



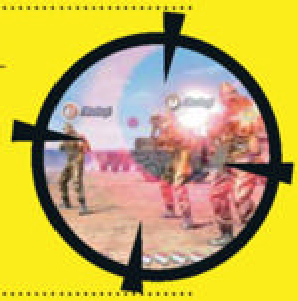
We can't say we're big fans of the hunting-based gun games that have become popular over the last few years, but this is an exception. Sega had previously released a couple of other dino-themed shooters – namely *Jurassic Park* and the awe-inspiring *The Lost World* – but this free-roaming prehistoric safari is different. The game's tagline, 'hunt or be hunted' pretty much sums up the experience.

GHOST SQUAD EVOLUTION (2007)



Designed by AM2, the team behind the *Virtua Cop* series, *Ghost Squad* was a fantastic game that built on all of Sega's lightgun arcade experience. With its more realistic squad-based dynamic, highlights included infiltrating jungle bases, defusing bombs and rescuing the President (someone really ought to increase his security budget) on Air Force One. The original *Ghost Squad* is also available on the Wii, and comes highly recommended.

RAMBO (2008)



Even if you've never played it you'll probably know what to expect from an arcade shooter based on Sly's not-so-undercover movie shenanigans. Playing like a ramped up *Operation Wolf*, *Rambo* is about as over-the-top as this sort of game gets, as scores of enemy soldiers run blindly into your machine-gun fire in recreations of outrageous scenes from the 'classic' films. And yes, there are explosive-tipped arrows at your disposal.

RESIDENT EVIL: THE DARKSIDE CHRONICLES (2009)



Capcom really upped the ante with the *Chronicles* games, greatly improving on its *Gun Survivor* series. This seemed a more thought out affair, re-telling the plot of the acclaimed *Resident Evil 2*. The slower pace of the game allows more room for atmospherics and, with the help of the Wii Zapper, you'll soon be dispatching dogs, lickers and undead cops with ease.

TERMINATOR SALVATION (2010)



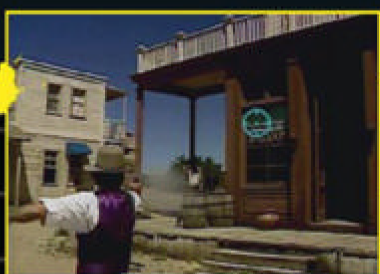
Our red-eyed robotic chums return in this arcade lightgun shooter from Eugene Jarvis' Raw Thrills. With its huge cabinet – topped with a menacing replica T-600 – and a constant barrage of explosions and laser fire, this is still one of the most visually stunning lightgun games out there. There's not much else that beats the joy of laying into a battalion of Terminators with a mini-gun, and we'd forgive you for coming away thinking that it's more fun than the actual movie.

RETRO GAMER SHOOTING RANGE

Memorable lightgun games you need to play

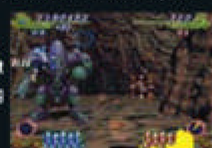
MAD DOG MCCREE (1990)

Packed with unintentionally hilarious acting and Spaghetti Western clichés, we can forgive *Mad Dog McCree* for giving arcade-goers the chance to be the star of their own live-action cowboy movie. Admittedly, it's not a particularly great game, but there was always something enjoyable about blasting stunt-men off rooftops while putting on your best Clint Eastwood scowl. Home versions made it to the Sega-CD, 3DO and CD-i, and you can pick it up nowadays on Wii, iOS or PS3.



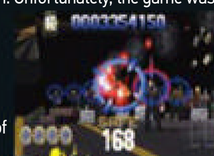
ELEMENTAL GEARBOLT (1997)

Released only in Japan and North America, *Elemental Gearbolt* was an on-rails shoot-'em-up with an RPG slant. Players could switch between three elements – fire, lightning and water – each with different effects, and gain experience points to level up between stages. Set in a universe packed with fantastical creatures and aerial battleships, as well as featuring an incredible soundtrack, it's probably the closest we'll ever get to playing a *Panzer Dragoon* lightgun shooter.



DIE HARD TRILOGY (1996)

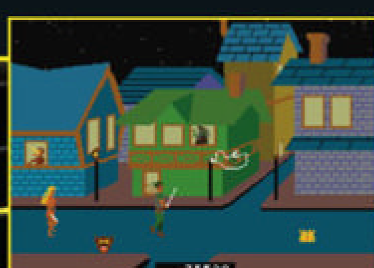
Although the *Virtua Cop* games never made it onto the PlayStation, this was a great alternative, the lightgun portion of the game roughly following the plot of *Die Hard 2*. Like *Virtua Cop 2*, it's a frantic on-rails shooter with multiple routes, and much of the fun comes from shattering glass and causing incidental destruction. Unfortunately, the game was released too early to work with the GunCon, but it was compatible with the PlayStation version of the Konami Justifier.



"MUCH OF THE FUN COMES FROM SHATTERING GLASS AND CAUSING DESTRUCTION"

CROSSBOW (1983)

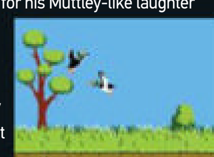
A marvellously entertaining adventure shooting game with colourful fantasy-inspired graphics, Exidy's *Crossbow* was an incredible achievement for its time. Players protected a party of adventurers that strolled casually across the screen with an extremely accurate crossbow-shaped lightgun, and it was your job to blast incoming hazards before they killed off of your buddies. This was the first arcade game to use fully digitised sound, music and speech, including the ominous 'You will die' message that rang out after inserting a coin. You could also customise your route through its various levels with a colour-coded 'path' system, visiting towns, caves, castles and spectacular erupting volcanoes along the way. And remember – don't shoot your friends…



DUCK HUNT (1984)

The game that launched a thousand virtual mallards skywards, for many players *Duck Hunt* was the first home lightgun title that didn't just involve shooting bouncing dots.

Developed by the internal Nintendo R&D 1 team headed by Gunpei Yokoi, Duck Hunt was appealingly simple, and if you didn't like blasting defenceless waterfowl an alternative clay-shooting mode was also available. The main game featured two modes with either one or two duck targets that would rise up out of the long grass when flushed out by your faithful hunting dog. The goggle-eyed canine actually became more famous for his Muttley-like laughter when you missed. Despite the game not letting players shoot him it didn't stop many aiming the odd pot-shot or two his way.





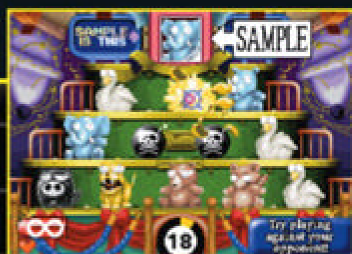
VIRTUA COP 2 (1995)

If you ask any gamer to name their favourite lightgun titles, chances are that this would be near the top of the list. *Virtua Cop 2* was aided by a nifty dynamic camera, which panned between targets, and a handy reticule that zoomed onto any enemies that were about to fire on your position. More accomplished than its prequel, the game features three massive stages, high-speed car chases, multiple routes through levels and even an amusing bit where you get to play a virtual drum kit with your bullets.



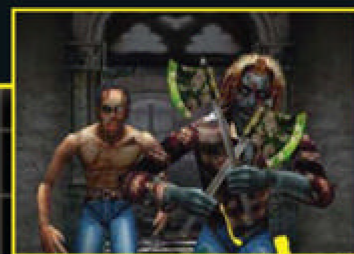
POINT BLANK (1994)

Namco's most famous lightgun franchise after *Time Crisis*, *Point Blank* is the good-time party gal of gun-based shooters, providing a wacky shooting gallery crammed with comical mini-games. This is one of the few lightgun titles that doesn't involve zapping humans, zombies or robots; although admittedly, the odd duck does still make an appearance. It's also one of the must-have GunCon-compatible PSone games, especially if you are into blasting stuffed toys, cardboard ninjas and fruit.



THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2 (1998)

The House Of The Dead series has long been a staple of arcades and, while we still have a soft spot for the original, this more expansive sequel is probably its finest hour. Strange events are occurring in Venice, giving our intrepid heroes a chance to do a bit of sight-seeing while splattering undead nasties. Of course, in these games, the satisfaction comes from blowing body parts off zombies and battling enormous genetic abominations. *The House Of The Dead 2* delivers this in spades.



SPECIAL THANKS

To Warez of Bournemouth, Mike Dixon of the Lass O' Gowrie Computer Club and Mike Bevan for the loan of their lightguns

OPERATION WOLF (1987)

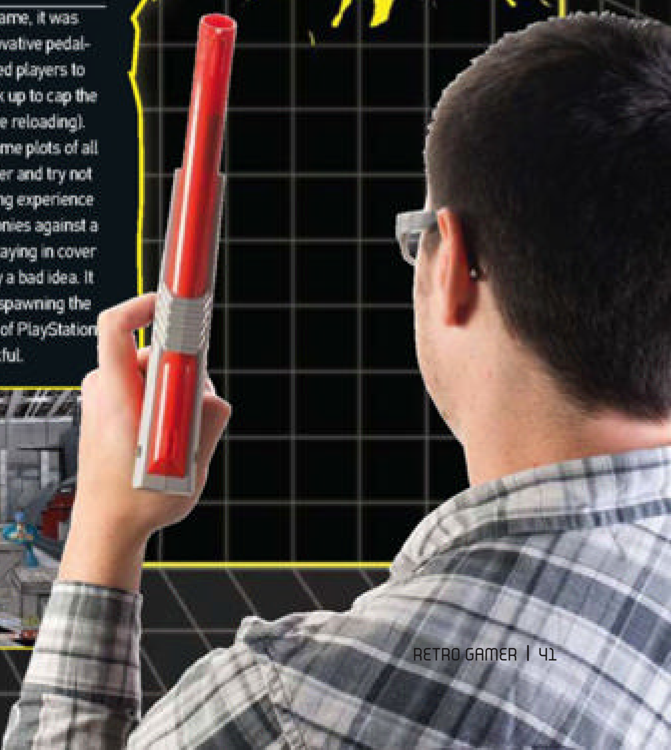
Like a blockbuster Eighties action-hero film, *Operation Wolf* was big, dumb tremendously entertaining and probably the most famous gun-based arcade shooter of the decade. From the start the odds were stacked against you, as you battled what appeared to be an entire army and avoided civilian casualties like stretcher-carrying nurses and inexplicable bikini-clad women. The game used a 2D forced perspective view, with large enemies popping up at close range and scaled down soldiers, tanks and helicopters appearing in the distance. The arcade cabinet featured a large fixed 'machine-gun' rigged with a feedback system that recoiled when fired, although the home ports – like the Master System, C64 and Spectrum – could make use of compatible lightguns.



TIME CRISIS (1996)

While *Time Crisis 2* is the better game, it was the original that introduced the innovative pedal-operated cover system, that allowed players to duck out of harm's way and pop back up to cap the bad guys (hopefully while they were reloading). Despite one of the cheesiest videogame plots of all time (rescue the President's daughter and try not to get shot) *Time Crisis* was a thrilling experience as you fought waves of villainous cronies against a strict time limit, which meant that staying in cover for prolonged periods was generally a bad idea. It was also the game responsible for spawning the splendid GunCon, for which millions of PlayStation owners can be truly thankful.

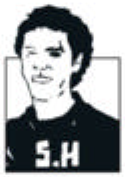




Sagaia

SEGA BLAST FISHING

RETROREVIVAL



» **Sega Master System**

» **Taito**

» **1982**

Having picked up a Master System recently, I've been trying to collect all of the best games available for the console. It's been an enjoyable hunt that has so far revealed to me two things: Sega's 8-Bit has a fantastic selection of arcade conversions, and Taito seemed to absolutely love the machine.

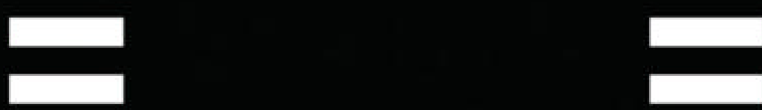
Now, I don't know if someone high up at Sega had some dirt on someone high up at Taito in the Eighties, but for whatever reason *Bubble Bobble*'s maker really spoiled the Master System back in the day by publishing and developing ports of many of its most popular arcade hits.

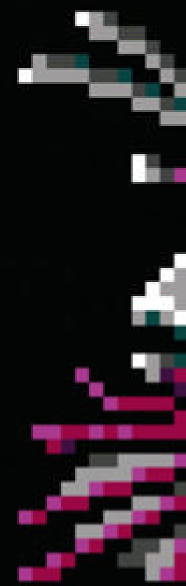
Rastan, *Bubble Bobble*, *The New Zealand Story* and *Operation Wolf* are well-known essential additions to any Master System collector, but a new favourite of mine is the console's port of *Darius II*.

It's a fantastic little conversion though, and like all the best shooters it looks great and is harder than Wolverine's knuckles. It will take you a long time to slay this beast even with the maximum stock of ships and the difficulty level ramped down, but if you're anything like me you'll continue to return to it until you do because it's so damn good.

Sure, there's some occasional flickering and slow-down when the action gets going, but when you see how polished the conversion is, little niggles like this are quickly forgotten about. Truly stunning.









Minority Report

The much-maligned Jaguar has a somewhat unfair reputation for having universally poor games. The major problem is that many people don't even know about its best titles, so Kieren Hawken is here to set the record straight about Atari's under-appreciated home console



Special JAGUAR Special



» [Jaguar] The 3D mode is basically just the original game with a new lick of paint.

MISSILE COMMAND

■ DEVELOPER: VIRTUALITY ■ YEAR: 1995

■ *Missile Command 3D* for the Jaguar has a very interesting story behind it. Originally known as *Missile Command 2000*, it was decided that it would become the very first game to utilise the Jaguar's ill-fated VR Helmet. Unfortunately, Atari canned the actual helmet before it went into production, this due to problems with the cost and feedback that it made some people feel sick.

Thankfully, Atari still shipped the game with a few minor tweaks, but left the VR mode in there. When a couple of prototype units of the VR Helmet were found around ten years ago, the inclusion of the mode in *Missile Command* proved useful, as the rare peripherals soon made appearances at shows all over the world.

Developed by Virtuality, who created the helmet and all those popular Virtual Reality arcade games of the early Nineties, *Missile Command* features three different versions of the game on a single cartridge. The first is Dave Theurer's original 1980 arcade game in all its glory. It might lack the trackball control but it plays great with the Jaguar's pad, and by pressing different numbers on the keypad you can manipulate the game in various clever ways. As well as being able to zoom in and out of the action, you can also transfer the game onto the screen of a virtual arcade machine or play it on



» SUPER BURNOUT

■ DEVELOPER: VIRTUAL XPERIENCE ■ YEAR: 1995

■ ***Super Burnout* is** a great example of how opinions of games can change drastically over time. Back in 1995, the gaming press universally panned *Super Burnout*, criticising it for not using polygons and for being 'the kind of 2D game we should have left behind with the Mega Drive'. Fast forward to the modern age and *Super Burnout* stands out as one of the best motorbike racers of its generation. An obvious tribute to Sega's *Super Hang-On*, it has aged far better than most 3D games of the time. Running at a solid 60 FPS with sprite scaling galore and a great soundtrack, *Super Burnout* is without a doubt the Jaguar's best racing game.



» ULTRA VORTEK

■ DEVELOPER: BEYOND GAMES ■ YEAR: 1995

■ **The first Jaguar** fighting game that most people think of is the now infamous *Kasumi Ninja*, with many people unaware that there is a much better option in *Ultra Vortek*. Using digitised graphics with real actors playing the parts of the fighters, this game doesn't scrimp on the gore either. As well as the standard finishing moves there is a variety of secret ones to discover too. *Ultra Vortek* moves much faster than the sluggish *Kasumi Ninja* and has a more advanced combat system, with great special moves and the ability to perform lethal combos. Sadly *Mortal Kombat 3* never made it out the door for the Jaguar, but *Ultra Vortek* is a pretty decent substitute.



» POWER DRIVE RALLY

■ DEVELOPER: RAGE SOFTWARE ■ YEAR: 1995

■ **Although it shares** a very similar name (adding the 'Rally' moniker) this is actually more of a sequel to the 16-bit versions of *Power Drive* rather than just another 'tarted up' port like so many Jaguar conversions. The Jaguar game features 38 tracks, variable weather conditions, different types of terrain, a rendered vehicle save system and a co-driver that calls out every twist and turn. There are a host of real cars that can be upgraded and you must also pass several advanced driving tests to progress. Rage significantly upgraded both the graphics and sound of the 16-bit versions to create one of the best top-down racers of its time. Highly recommended.

» [Jaguar] Bournemouth 3013, can you save it from the alien attack?



» [Jaguar] Looks like we will all be eating jellied eels for dinner again.





» ABOUT THE SYSTEM

- The Jaguar was the first 64-bit games console. Many people argue this, but the system had no CPU to define it like other systems of the time. Instead, the Jaguar had five different processors (two of which are 64-bit) connected to a 64-bit data bus.
- A CD add-on for the machine came out in 1995 but only saw 13 commercial games released for it.

a 3D replication of the Atari Lynx. The second game included on the cartridge is '3D Mode'. This is just a slight update of the original game that features some fancy graphics and a zoomed-in view, meaning you need to watch the radar and scroll the screen around to take down the missiles attacking your city below. It's a nice take on the classic game, but isn't a patch on the excellent 'Virtual Mode', which is easily worth tracking this game down for.

Virtual Mode is a completely new version of the game that features a first-person perspective, polygon graphics, a superb soundtrack, great power-ups and end-of-level bosses. It's been tailor made to get the best out of Atari's machine and it does it exceptionally well. In Virtual Mode you need to look up to the sky to see the missiles coming and switch between the three bases to maximum effect. Levels also now take place in different settings, with you starting underwater (in an obvious homage to Imagic's *Missile Command* clone *Atlantis*) before progressing up to a level where you must protect your space station from both missiles and asteroids, paying tribute to another Atari classic.

Missile Command 3D is a worthy update of one of the greatest arcade games of all time. Even without the VR helmet it gives an impressive illusion of real 3D that really showcases what the Jaguar can do in skilled hands. When you see games like this, and the equally superb *Tempest 2000*, you really do wish that Atari had had the foresight to update a few more of its classic franchises for its machine.



» [Jaguar] Ever wished you could play with a Lynx on your Jaguar? Well now you can.



» HYPER FORCE

■ DEVELOPER: VISUAL IMPACT ■ YEAR: 1999

■ **Although *Hyper Force*** was first developed back in 1995, it never actually saw a proper commercial release. In fact we had to wait until 1999 to finally play it when independent publishers Songbird Productions picked up the rights and gave the game the release it deserved. We are very thankful that it did so, as what we have here is a stonking run-and-gun-style arcade adventure, which is just the sort of thing the Jaguar was lacking during its short commercial lifespan. There are over 20 levels of side-scrolling action here with secret areas, weapons upgrades, huge sprites, pulsing music and a very handy save game feature too.



» RUINER PINBALL

■ DEVELOPER: HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE ■ YEAR: 1995

■ **PC Engine and** Mega Drive owners will be very familiar with Naxat's popular pinball series that included *Alien Crush* and *Dragon's Fury*. *Ruiner Pinball* for the Jaguar is very much a homage to those classic games, adopting a similar style that throws realism out the window in favour of a more fantastical approach. There are two tables available to play, each with a distinct theme. The first, called The Tower, opts for a ghoulish look complete with vampire bats, a skull for the ball and a witch who casts spells. The second table Ruiner, features a military theme where your ball is under constant attack from enemy forces. Fast, fun and very frantic.



» TOTAL CARNAGE

■ DEVELOPER: MIDWAY / HAND MADE SOFTWARE
■ YEAR: 2005

■ **This superb conversion** of the popular Midway arcade game was another title that went unreleased during the Jaguar's short commercial lifespan. Like many of the others it was picked by Carl Forhan's Songbird Productions and, following some bug fixes and an official licence from Midway, the game finally saw its long-awaited release in the summer of 2005. In order to retain the eight-way firing of the coin-op, the game uses a different button for each firing direction. While *Total Carnage* isn't particularly well suited to the original Jaguar controller, it does become more manageable when using the superior Pro Controller.

Minority Report

PROTECTOR: SPECIAL EDITION



» [Jaguar] An excellent Defender clone that every Jag owner needs to own.

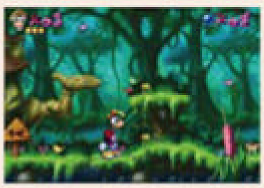
■ DEVELOPER: BETHESDA SOFTWORKS / SONGBIRD PRODUCTIONS ■ YEAR: 1999

■ **Songbird Productions' release of *Protector* somewhat blurs the boundary between commercial and homebrew games.** The first *Protector* game was released on the Commodore VIC-20 and Atari 8-bit back in 1981, with a sequel following a year later that was also available on the Commodore 64 among other systems. Clones of the hugely popular arcade game *Defender*, they were well received, but quickly forgotten. Fast-forward to the mid-Nineties and *Protector* was revived for the Atari Jaguar by a studio that would become part of the modern day Bethesda Softworks, now best known for games like *Skyrim* and *Fallout*. However, when the programmers learned that Jeff Minter was programming an official version of *Defender* for the console the project was abandoned, and it wasn't until it was discovered by Carl Forhan of Songbird Productions in 1998 that it was finally finished. He didn't just complete the game and release it though, he also embraced the feedback of Jaguar fans and partially re-wrote the game to make the *Special Edition*. We're glad he did, because this is a far superior game to *Defender 2000* that brings a slice of old school shoot-'em-up action to the Jaguar. The game essentially plays just like *Defender* but with added features like asteroid showers and a host of new enemies. *Protector: Special Edition* also features some beautiful backgrounds, superb effects and a great soundtrack.

» RAYMAN

■ DEVELOPER: UBISOFT ■ YEAR: 1995

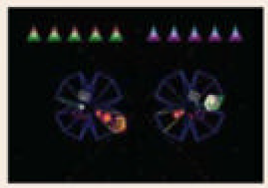
■ This is not only the original version of *Rayman* but arguably the best one too, with over twice as many colours on screen as the PlayStation and Saturn versions.



» TEMPEST 2000

■ DEVELOPER: LLAMASOFT ■ YEAR: 1994

■ It would just be wrong to do a list of great Jaguar games without including Jeff Minter's psychedelic classic. Right up there with the greatest games ever made.





» TOWERS II: PLIGHT OF THE STARGAZER

■ DEVELOPER: JV GAMES ■ YEAR: 1996

■ **Published by Telegames** right at the end of the Jaguar's commercial life, *Towers II* is as close as you will get to an RPG on the system. This is a conversion of the Atari Falcon game of the same name and is an advanced adventure game with a *Doom*-style game engine. You must explore the tower in order to level up your character, acquire new skills such as magic or fighting, and talk to its residents in order to unravel the mystery of why you are there. This huge game provides many hours of gameplay and thankfully has a built-in save feature to store your progress.



» IRON SOLDIER 1 & 2

■ DEVELOPER: ECLIPSE SOFTWARE ■ YEAR: 1994-1996

■ **We are cheating** here slightly by including two games in one entry, but feel that it's worth mentioning both of them. The original *Iron Soldier* game was one of the first games to really showcase the power of the Jaguar. Arriving at the height of the 3D mech game craze it set new standards for the genre. The second game, which was released on both cartridge and CD, improved on the first game greatly by adding more extensive texture mapping, a superior draw distance, more advanced missions and a brand new mech into the equation too. The series later spawned a couple of sequels for the Sony PlayStation consoles.



» HOVER STRIKE

■ DEVELOPER: ATARI GAMES ■ YEAR: 1995

■ ***Hover Strike* was the** game that silenced numerous critics when it came to the Jaguar's ability to handle textured-mapped 3D graphics. The game was originally called *Battlezone 2000* and its roots are clear for all to see when you first play it. You must guide your armoured hovercraft across a host of alien planets, taking out key targets and collecting valuable resources. The planetscapes vary greatly with impressive lighting effects and clean 3D textures. A later CD update of the game improved the graphics even further and added extra missions, more secrets, a CD soundtrack, a new camera view and movie-like cut-scenes.

I-WAR

■ DEVELOPER: IMAGITEC DESIGN ■ YEAR: 1995

■ **Every Jaguar owner out there will have no doubt played the system's pack-in game *Cybermorph*.** It's equally likely that many of you will have seen the cult Disney film *Tron* at some point in your life. Mix those two together and you have *I-War*, a rather spiffing first-person shooter that's worth playing through, and once again highlights the technical grunt of Atari's console.

You control a digital tank that has been sent into a corrupted database to clean it up and fix the bugs found there. You do this by collecting the scattered data pods and taking out any approaching enemies. In this respect, the core gameplay of *I-War* is very much like *Cybermorph*; only you cannot fly off course. *I-War* however is a far more stylish game than that earlier Jaguar title thanks to its flat shaded polygons, vibrant colours and well-designed levels. There is also a rocking techno soundtrack to accompany the game, which was produced by the same people responsible for the amazing *Tempest 2000* soundtrack. A special mention must also go to the excellent bonus stages that take place in *I-War*. These take place in an impressive 3D tunnel sequence where you move your craft around from a third-person perspective while collecting as many pods as you can. *I-War* is brilliant example of the type of 3D shoot-'em-up that became very popular in the mid-Nineties. What makes it even better is that it's a Jaguar exclusive, one that can now be purchased relatively cheaply too. So pick it up – there's no excuse not to.

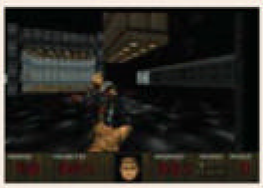


» [Jaguar] *I-War* still impresses today. Now stop gawping and start shooting.

» DOOM

■ DEVELOPER: ID SOFTWARE ■ YEAR: 1994

■ The only reason we're including this port here is because Spencer Nilsen's new soundtrack is absolutely glorious. It's an otherwise excellent conversion of id's game that still plays brilliantly.



» ALIEN VS PREDATOR

■ DEVELOPER: REBELLION ■ YEAR: 1994

■ Often called the Jaguar's 'killer app', *Alien Vs Predator* was the first game in a franchise that's still going today, and remains one of its best games. A solid FPS that every Jaguar owner should play.





» BRETT HULL NHL HOCKEY

■ DEVELOPER: RINGLER STUDIOS ■ YEAR: 2001

■ **Accolade had a** wide range of sports games planned for release on the Jaguar but none of them ever made it out of the door. Several years after the demise of the machine though, complete versions of this game and the Jaguar version of *Barkley: Shut Up & Jam* were discovered and released by the folks at B&C ComputerVisions. The Jaguar version of *Brett Hull* is a vast improvement over the Mega Drive and SNES iterations, with a 3D camera that follows the action, commentary by Al Michaels and more advanced gameplay features. A CD version of the game with FMV cut-scenes was also found and released several years later.



» ZERO 5

■ DEVELOPER: SCASPIAN SOFTWARE ■ YEAR: 1996

■ ***Zero 5* was** originally a game for the Atari STe and was one of the few titles to take advantage of the 'enhanced' version of the popular 16-bit computer. The Jaguar version, despite the lack of a name change, is actually a sequel to that game and is just as impressive. It's a 3D polygon-based shooter that features free-roaming third-person perspective space battles as well as *STUN Runner*-esque tunnel sections. Sadly, *Zero 5* slipped under the radar of many Jaguar owners due to its late release, but that doesn't mean you should ignore it. An impressive game that will go down well with anyone that enjoys a challenge.



» SKYHAMMER

■ DEVELOPER: REBELLION ■ YEAR: 1996

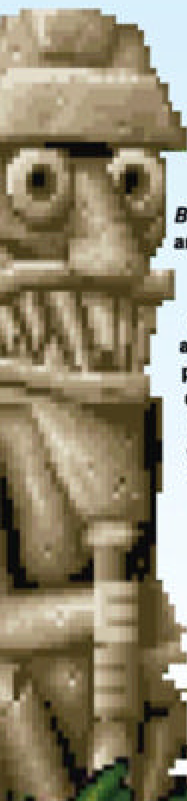
■ **Rebellion might be** more famous for the seminal *Alien Vs Predator* for the Jaguar, but it has to be said that *Skyhammer* is the far more impressive game. This was actually supposed to be the last game released for the Jaguar by Atari yet, despite it having been widely reviewed by the gaming press to critical acclaim, it wasn't until the year 2000 that the game was eventually published. Set in a dark, *Blade Runner*-esque world, *Skyhammer* is very reminiscent of the PC game *Descent*, as you take part in various flying-based missions to neutralise enemy targets. *Skyhammer* is a really impressive example of just what the Jaguar is capable of.



A loving pastiche of Indiana Jones, Monkey Island and Saturday popcorn mini-serials, Flight Of The Amazon Queen was a memorable graphic adventure. Mike Bevan discovers how two valiant Aussies took on the mighty LucasArts and, against all odds, succeeded



» An early Steve Stamatiadis pencil sketch of some of *Amazon Queen*'s main characters.



For fans of graphic adventure gaming, the Nineties was probably the high watermark of the genre, with companies like Revolution Software, Sierra On-Line and the all-conquering LucasArts cranking out timeless classics like *Beneath A Steel Sky*, *Gabriel Knight* and *The Secret Of Monkey Island*. Designing point-and-click adventures had become big business, with teams of dozens of writers, artists and programmers working on each project. But there were a few notable exceptions. One of these was *Flight Of The Amazon Queen*, a game created over three years on a shoestring budget by a couple of unassuming guys from Queensland, Australia.

Amazon Queen is an enjoyably tongue-in-cheek parody of Fifties adventure matinee serials, set in a slightly surreal South American jungle setting. With sharp-witted pilot-for-hire Joe King (geddit?) as its hero, it's a rollicking tale of prissy movie starlets, busty Amazon women, improbable genetic engineering, comic books and lederhosen. The men behind the game were programmer John Passfield and artist Steve Stamatiadis, who had met in a comic book shop in Brisbane run by a mutual friend. "Our friend knew I made games and he knew Steve wanted to so he introduced us," remembers John, who had previously dabbled in simple arcade-action games on the Australian-developed MicroBee system. It was the possibilities of the Amiga and an encounter with Guybrush Threepwood that would radically change the direction of the duo's next project.

"I was developing a game based on *Halloween Harry* (one of my first games, originally made in 1985) with Steve when the friend who had introduced us showed me *Monkey Island*," says John. "At the time I was also writing and drawing comic strips and loved how *Monkey Island* was basically an interactive comic, so it really resonated with me. So then and there we decided we had to make a graphic adventure, and set off making *Amazon Queen* while we were still finishing off *Halloween Harry*. Talk about biting off more than we could chew!"

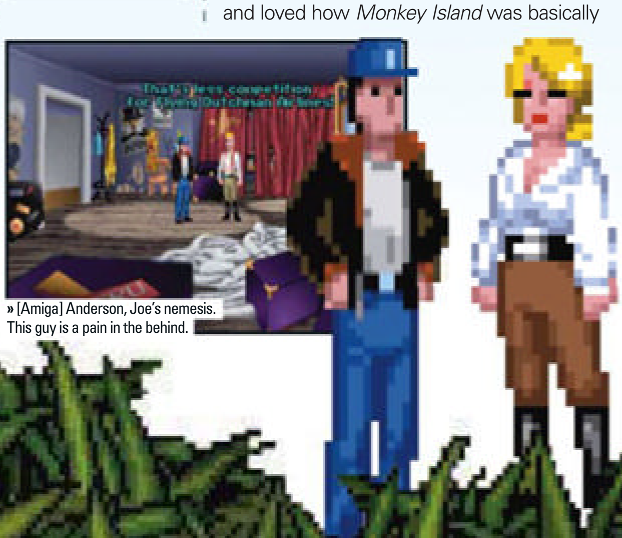
Another well-known Lucas franchise would also be a big inspiration for the game. "We were huge fans of *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, and that genre seemed ripe for a graphic adventure," explains John. "When we started, there were no *Indiana Jones* adventure games. We set *Amazon Queen* in the Fifties, as this was an era that hadn't been explored by *Indiana Jones*, and we went with a sci-fi theme of dinosaur women, alien crystal skulls and otherworldly robots because this was the antithesis of the movies. Little did we know that Spielberg and Lucas would explore these themes with the fourth *Indy* movie many years later!"

It was an ambitious plan, given that the pair were completely inexperienced in making graphic adventures. *Monkey Island* had been built around the existing and already proven SCUMM engine, and John would

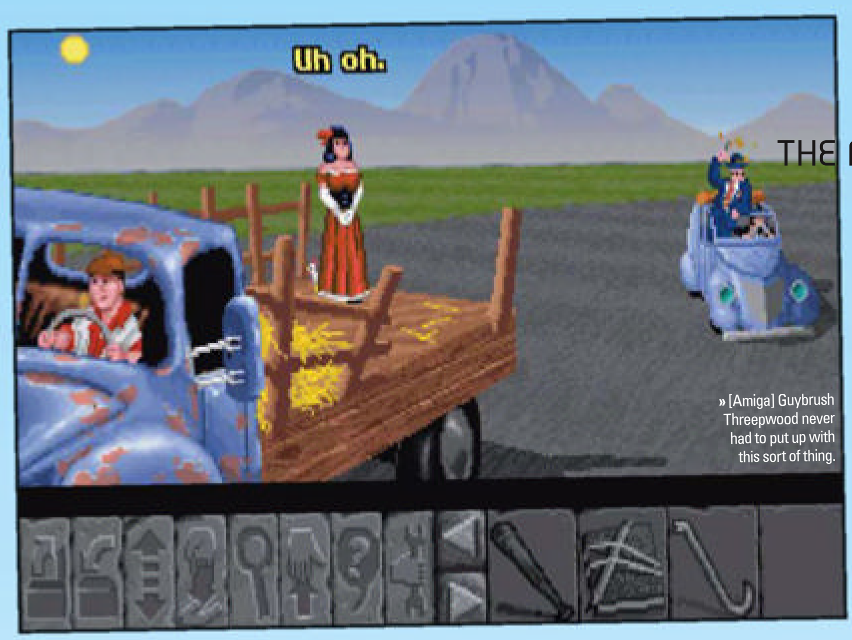


IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** RENEGADE/ WARNER ACTIVE
- » **DEVELOPER:** INTERACTIVE BINARY ILLUSIONS
- » **RELEASED:** 1995
- » **PLATFORM:** AMIGA, MS DOS
- » **GENRE:** GRAPHIC ADVENTURE



» [Amiga] Anderson, Joe's nemesis. This guy is a pain in the behind.



» [Amiga] Guybrush Threepwood never had to put up with this sort of thing.

have to create his own from scratch. The game's story, interface, dialogue and graphics would also have to be designed between just the two of them. John started working on the new engine using AMOS, an Amiga programming language with its roots in BASIC. "I called it JASPAR, which stood for John And Steve's Programmable Adventure Resource, a truly terrible acronym," says John, "but we were hell-bent on emulating LucasArts games, even down to giving our internal tools funny names…"

While John laboured on the engine, as well as working on the game's dialogue, logic and puzzles, Steve became what he refers to as "the entire art department" of *Amazon Queen*, designing the game's characters – Joe, faithful sidekick Sparky, film star Faye Russel and the evil Dr Frank Ironstein, head of the mysterious Flöda organisation. He also created the many cutscenes and in-game backgrounds, the impressive *Monkey Island*-style full-screen character animations and the colourful *Commander Rocket* comic book. "Steve had to do the graphics twice – once for PC and again for the Amiga, so he was busy!" John reveals. "I always enjoyed coming up with the puzzles, although it was tricky to judge their difficulty as you knew the solutions. I think the Sloth Island Temple puzzles are my favourites as they are such typical adventure game puzzles involving putting skulls and crystals into slots to open secret doors. I also liked that the *Commander Rocket* comic had clues for later puzzles."

While creating a game on the scale of *Amazon Queen* was a remarkable achievement in itself, getting a publishing deal for their creation also proved difficult early on for John and Steve. "There were no real publishers in Australia, so to release a game involved a lot of work and a little luck to land a deal with a UK or US publisher," explains John. "For a brief moment it looked like the local distribution arm of Electronic Arts might have been able to get us published. We met with them a few times and, while we had no contract and weren't paid anything, they implied that they might be able to publish us. It all came to a head when we were invited down to show *Amazon Queen* and *Halloween Harry* to their US boss, who was in Australia."

"We set up the PC and Amiga with the games running and he walked in and said 'Don't tell me your names as I won't remember them', then spent ten minutes being the most rude and arrogant person he could be. He told us that our games sucked and that we had them on the wrong platforms. I was shocked and didn't know what to say. Then he left the room and the local Australian folks said 'Well, I guess that's that.' I got home and set out to prove them wrong, and sent the games off to every major publisher I could find. Amazingly, Renegade, the coolest publisher at the time, called and said they wanted to publish us. As for the EA exec… well, he inspired the obnoxious bellboy at the start of the game."

"Renegade were an absolute dream to work with," says John appreciatively. "Any advice they gave us was constructive and we usually agreed with them." He reveals how the opening of *Flight Of The Amazon Queen*, where Joe escapes from his arch-nemesis Anderson and first runs into the spoilt Faye Russel, was a result of the collaboration with the pair's new publisher. "Originally it began in the Amazon, but when we signed with Renegade they suggested we do a sequence before that to establish the characters, and to extend game play. That's how the hotel sequence came about. That was probably the biggest challenge."

For the 'talkie' PC version of *Flight Of The Amazon Queen*, Renegade managed to snare some impressive voice talent such as well-known *The Good Life* actress Penelope Keith, comedian Enn Reitel, and William Hootkins – aka 'Porkins' from *Star Wars* – in various roles, including the aforementioned bellboy. "I was at the studio when the voices were recorded," recalls John. "All of the actors were based in the UK where we recorded the dialogue, so we were very lucky to get Penelope, Enn and Will. Penelope [who voices the Temple Guardian] was so much fun and it was amazing to have her working on our game. We grew up with her ▶



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

HALLOWEEN HARRY AKA ALIEN CARNAGE
(PICTURED)
SYSTEM: DOS
YEAR: 1994

TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER
SYSTEM: PS2, XBOX, GAMECUBE
YEAR: 2002

DESTROY ALL HUMANS! 2
SYSTEM: PS2, XBOX
YEAR: 2006



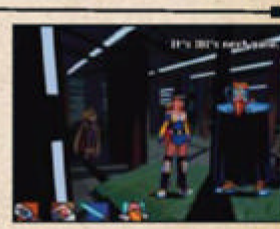
» [Amiga] Dr Frank Ironstein hams it up.



RETURN OF THE AMAZON QUEEN

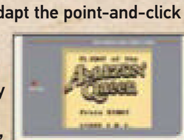
John Passfield on the adventure sequels that never made it

"I plotted out a sequel called *Return Of The Amazon Queen* that involved Joe scouring the globe, based on a series of clues hidden in the backs of paintings by a renaissance painter called Delpaso. The clues led to a long lost treasure which would have, in *Amazon Queen* tradition, been some otherworldly technology. But we never did any prototype development on that game."



"We actually developed a few playable prototypes of a new graphic adventure called *Stereo Jack*. This was what we called 'cyber-clunk,' a bright and stylish parody of the dark and gritty cyber-punk fiction. You played a hacker called Stereo Jack who was hot on the trail of a stolen super computer. We also almost completed a 3D adventure called *Gruesome Castle*. It was 80 per cent complete when the publisher pulled out. Shortly after we formed Krome Studios and the project was shelved."

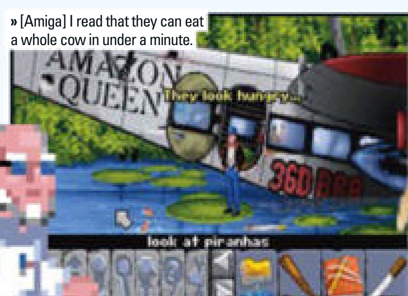
"The Game Boy art [below] were some mock-ups we did while exploring how we could adapt the point-and-click game to a handheld device. We built a prototype on the Amiga to test out the controls. Sadly there was no interest in doing a handheld version."







» [Amiga] The Amazon Queen prepares for take-off.



» [Amiga] I read that they can eat a whole cow in under a minute.



GLOBE TROTTERS

Classic videogame heroes that search the world for adventure

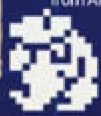
KEY

- MONTY MOLE
- LARA CROFT
- INDIANA JONES
- NATHAN DRAKE
- RICK DANGEROUS
- CARMEN SANDIEGO
- ZAK MCKRACKEN

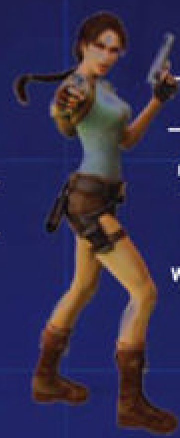


MONTY MOLE

LOCATIONS: CHANNEL FERRY CROSSING, THE EIFFEL TOWER, GERMANY, GREECE



■ The mobile mammalian star was seen legging it in *Monty On The Run*, presumably due to persecution from Arthur Scargill's lawyers. In *Auf Weidersehen Monty* he's off round Europe trying to raise money to buy a Greek island. And, as improbable superhero Impossamole, he visits the Far East and the Amazon.



LARA CROFT

LOCATIONS: THE ANDES, EGYPT, THE ANDAMAN SEA, VENICE, JAPAN

■ After over a dozen *Tomb Raider* games, Miss Croft's khaki hot pants have certainly seen more than their fair share of archaeological hotspots, from the T-Rex inhabited Andes of her debut to Venetian canals, Egyptian tombs and the Great Wall of China. Her younger incarnation is currently fighting for survival off the coast of Japan in Crystal Dynamics' reboot of the franchise.

NATHAN DRAKE

LOCATIONS: NEPAL, PANAMA, THE SOUTH PACIFIC, ARABIAN DESERT

■ Naughty Dog's grizzled, wise-cracking hero made a name for himself by dangling precariously over precipices in a variety of exotic settings, particularly in the spectacular opening of *Uncharted 2*, played out among the mountains of Nepal. He's also swanned around the South Pacific, and survived a particularly gnarly plane crash in the deserts of Arabia in *Uncharted 3*.



RICK DANGEROUS

LOCATIONS: EGYPT, HYDE PARK, FREEZIA, ATOMIC MUD MINES, PLANET BARF

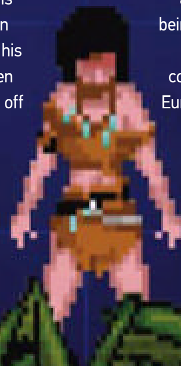
■ An expert at walking no more than 200 yards before impaling himself on a spike, Rick loves nothing better than a suicidal stroll through an Egyptian tomb. His penchant for globe-trotting and dying at any given opportunity seems to have been a big influence on his successor, Lara Croft. In *Rick Dangerous 2* he even manages to top himself in Hyde Park before jetting off for extra-terrestrial hi-jinks.

CARMEN SANDIEGO

LOCATIONS: LONDON, WASHINGTON, ATHENS, SINGAPORE, LIMA

■ The mysterious arch super-spy from the Brøderbund educational franchise was always off around the globe causing mischief, with players being asked where in the world she and her villainous henchmen were holed up. Later instalments concentrated on specific locations like the USA and Europe, while in *Where In Time Is Carmen Sandiego?* she even got to go all Marty McFly on us.

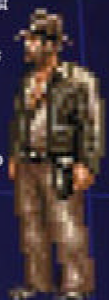


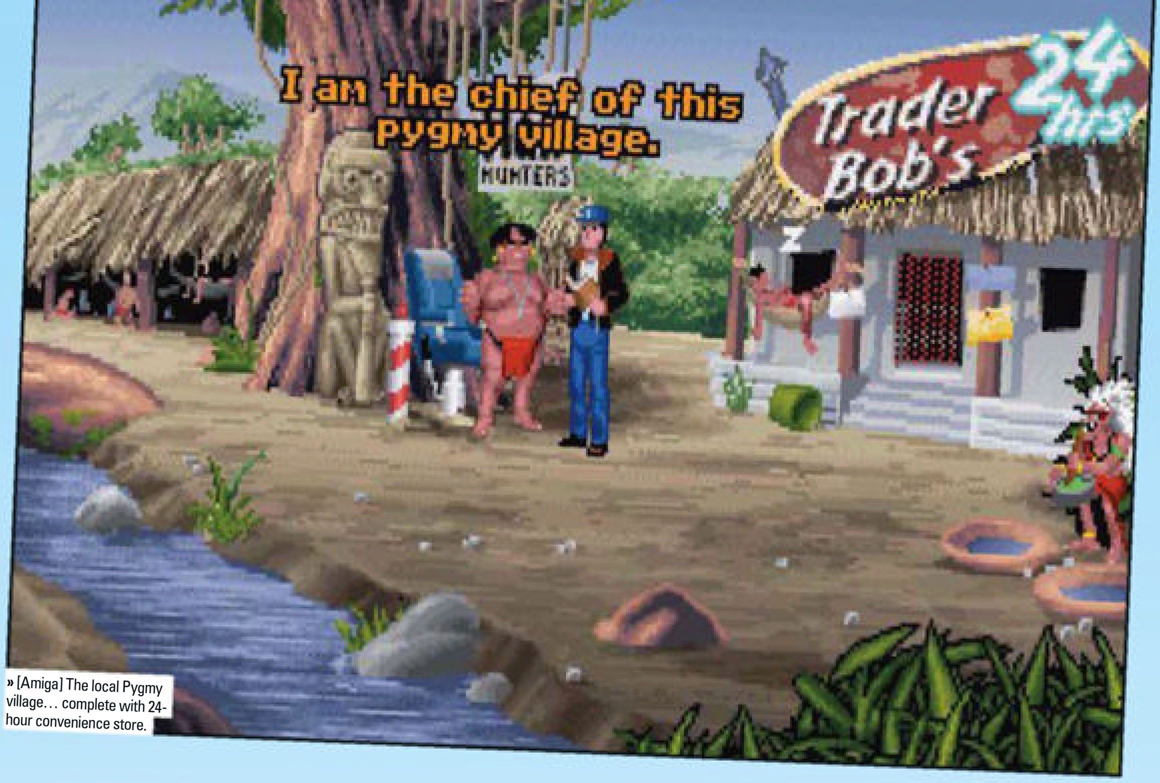


INDIANA JONES

LOCATIONS: BARNETT COLLEGE, BERLIN, ICELAND, CAIRO, ATLANTIS

■ Along with his movie-derived escapades, documented in LucasArts' *Indiana Jones' Greatest Adventures* and *The Last Crusade*, Indy's quest to find the legendary island in *Fate Of Atlantis* must have really eaten up the air miles. With an exceptional, if convoluted, plot taking him from Iceland to South America, and Cairo to Monte Carlo and Greece it's still our fave *Indy* game ever.





» [Amiga] The local Pygmy village… complete with 24-hour convenience store.



» The UK cover art evoked the game's Fifties matinee vibe beautifully.

on TV in shows like *To The Manor Born*. She was such a lovely person."

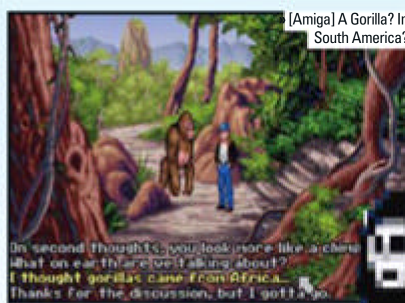
The finishing touch to the package was a soundtrack by the late, great Richard Joseph and a beautiful box cover by artist Pete Mullins – although the US market sadly received some dubious alternative artwork. "The US cover is dreadful," agrees John. "Renegade was great in giving developers approval on art which we had for the UK release but, by the time the US version launched, Renegade was bought out by Warner Active and they didn't share the same values. The first we saw of the cover was the final box art. I don't know how they could have thought it was better than the UK version… it features tribes people who aren't in the game and a cobra which isn't even native to South America!"

While *Amazon Queen* might not have been as commercially successful as LucasArts magnum opi such as the million selling *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis*, it did relatively well by graphic adventure standards. "I believe it sold fewer than 100,000 copies, which at the time was okay," John tells us. "Luckily for us, Renegade had an amazing 50/50 royalty deal so we made money. In fact, it kept us paid for a number of years afterwards, but we did live very cheaply during and after release!"

In 2004, John and Steve graciously offered the game as one of the first official free-to-play titles for the ScummVM graphic adventure emulator, which led to a commercial iOS re-release in 2008. "I wanted the game to be played by everyone, but PC technology had changed so much that the original version was no longer working and wasn't available for purchase anymore," says John. "Making it freeware on ScummVM meant many more people could find and enjoy the game, years after it had stopped selling in retail. Having *Amazon Queen* on ScummVM certainly helped get it onto mobile, which meant more people can play it. The iOS version still makes money today, which is nice."

After *Amazon Queen*, John and Steve went on to co-found Krome Studios, the antipodean outfit that brought us *Ty The Tasmanian Tiger* and more recently, Microsoft's ill-fated Game Room. John is still active in the industry with his new company Red Sprite Studios (see www.passfieldgames.com) while Steve most recently worked on Krome's *Blade Kitten* and several spin-off comic books, continuing his passion for art and character design.

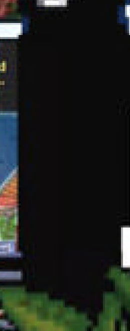
As the pair's first major project, *Amazon Queen* is still a proud source of nostalgia for John. "Looking back on it, I'm amazed we got it made," he says. "Tony Ball helped us by converting the code over to PC, but the initial design, art, code, editing and writing was done by just the two of us. We didn't have any filter in terms of a publisher telling us what not to do, so we put in gags that made us laugh and puzzles we wanted to play. It took almost three years and we were beating ourselves up over how slow we were. In hindsight I think we did a pretty good job, given our limited resources." And we'd have to agree. The boys from Brisbane did good.

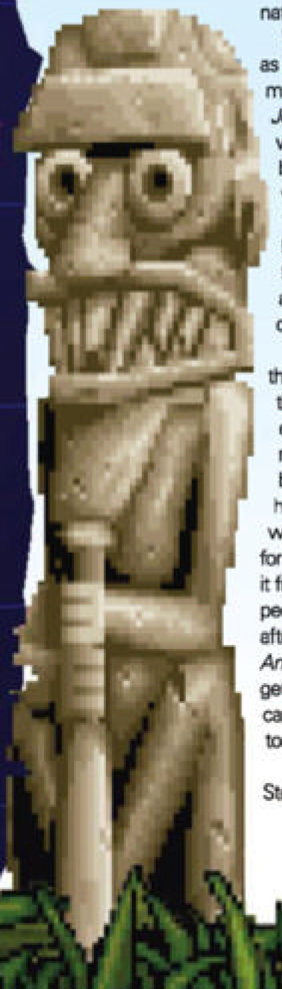


» [Amiga] A Gorilla? In South America?



» [Amiga] Now how did Flöda get hold of that?!







ZAK MCKRACKEN

LOCATIONS: SEATTLE, KATHMANDU, BERMUDA, MEXICO, MARS

■ Hapless journo Zak ends up shelling out most of his hard-won earnings on overpriced airline flights staffed by grumpy stewardesses, all the while chasing stories for his overbearing boss. Constantly plagued with having to re-purchase tickets because he left an essential object behind, the marvellously enlightening experience of mind-melding with a squirrel and a yak might have made it worth it.



NES
A Celebration

Nintendo's Famicom – better known in the West as the NES – turns 30 this year. To celebrate this momentous occasion, we invite you to join Damien McFerran as he delves deep into the lineage of the legendary console



NES Heroes

THE GAMING MASCOTS THAT WERE BORN ON THE NES

MARIO



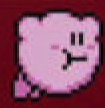
■ Nintendo's most famous mascot, Mario has fronted a wide range of million-selling titles. Sports a bushy moustache and a flagrant disregard for fungi. Once starred in a movie, but doesn't like to talk about it.

MEGA MAN



■ Otherwise known as The Blue Bomber. Capable of stealing weapon systems from fallen enemies. Recently confirmed as the next entrant in the *Super Smash Bros* title for Wii U and 3DS.

KIRBY



■ Ball-like sack of air who is able to swallow enemies whole and use them as projectiles. Despite his charming appearance, Kirby is lethal when cornered. He has graced almost every Nintendo console since the NES.

SIMON BELMONT



■ Hero of *Castlevania*, Simon wields a legendary whip and counts slaying vampires and werewolves as just two of his interests. Others include needlework and stamp collecting.

LINK



■ Elf-like hero of *The Legend Of Zelda* series. Feels that it's dangerous to go anywhere alone. Fondness for fairies, princesses in peril, green clothing and occasionally sailing in boats.

If your delicate childhood years were populated with games such as *Super Mario Bros*, *Duck Hunt*, *Metroid* and *Mega Man*, we're about to make you feel very old indeed: the Nintendo Entertainment System (the Japanese version, to be precise) is 30 years old this year. For many players, it represents their first ever taste of videogaming and, despite the years that have elapsed and the vast gulf that exists in technological power when compared to modern systems, the NES and Famicom continue to be held in high regard by players. Nintendo is still making some cash out of its legacy thanks to its successful Virtual Console services, which are now available on the Wii, Wii U and 3DS consoles.

Back in 1983 – the year after the home videogame market began its spectacular crash in North America – Nintendo pushed the Famicom onto Japanese store shelves and effectively birthed a legend. The Famicom remains an iconic platform in its home territory and became just as dominant in the US, where it held sway over a reinvigorated interactive entertainment arena. If you wished to simplify the history books and insist that Atari destroyed gaming in North America (which isn't really true) then it's not too much of an exaggeration to suggest Nintendo resurrected it.

Way before these events, the bumper profits and the million-selling franchises, Nintendo had an idea. Buoyed by the success of its arcade titles and the portable Game & Watch range, the ▶



» [NES] Nintendo's 8-bit console contained plenty of solid arcade ports, including all of the company's big hitters like *Donkey Kong*.



» The Western design for the Famicom was vastly different in look, being more like an ugly looking breadbin.

company turned next to the nascent Japanese home console market, which was too small to have been impacted by the disastrous shenanigans on the other side of the Pacific Ocean. Nintendo hardware designer Masayuki Uemura set to work on a system codenamed 'GameCom', only to change the title when his helpful spouse suggested 'Family Computer' (or 'Famicom' for short), a playful variation on the Japanese description of a typical PC. Prototypes were constructed with a low-cost metal shell, but this was discovered to be too fragile, and so plastic became the material used instead. Although many have suggested that white and red plastic was used because it was cheap to source, Uemura has recently revealed that the colours were chosen by Nintendo president Hiroshi Yamauchi, based on his own personal preference.



Viewed with modern eyes, the Famicom is a curious piece of technology. Toy-like in design and clearly aimed at young players, it's very different from the Western NES which would follow in 1985. Cost was a huge consideration during production; the Famicom's pads – complete with the now-standard D-pad controller, made famous by Gunpei Yokoi's Game & Watch range of LCD portables – were hardwired into the console's body to keep manufacturing expense down. Quizzically, Uemura included a microphone in one of the pads – an extravagance which saw hardly any use in software, but has become trendy in recent years thanks to Microsoft's Kinect and Apple's Siri. He also installed an unnecessary eject button for removing cartridges, later claiming that he thought young players would gain some simple enjoyment from pressing it. Despite these playful features, Nintendo was deadly serious about making the machine as good as it possibly could be – production of the console's cartridge connectors was carried out in-house to keep quality as high as possible.

Even so, the Famicom launch didn't go entirely according to plan. The first shipment of consoles had to be recalled due to faulty chips which caused them to crash. Like every major decision made by the company in those early days, the recall was done at the request of Yamauchi, who felt that initial sales momentum should be sacrificed in order to preserve Nintendo's public image. His instinct proved correct, and the Famicom overcame this setback and went on to sell half a million units in two months – an incredible success considering the small size of the Japanese videogame market at the time. Almost overnight, Nintendo had created an entire industry in its homeland, and the Famicom's toy-like appearance did little to dent its appeal with all agegroups – it was eagerly lapped up by kids, parents and suit-wearing businessmen alike.

> **"Nintendo had clearly taken note of the many mistakes made by others"**

David Darling CBE

CO-FOUNDER OF CODEMASTERS, WHICH CREATED THE SEMINAL NES TOP-DOWN RACER MICRO MACHINES



What was it like publishing and developing games on the NES?
It was really good fun making games for the NES. We had been publishing on home computers, then we went to a trade show in America and some Japanese company we'd never heard of brought out a game machine – a little grey box. People were quite negative about it. Technical people were quite negative because they saw the Amiga as being better, and retailers were also down on it because Atari had crashed the console market previously. Retailers didn't want to hear about another console as long as they lived.

But then, after the show, Nintendo worked wonders. Over the next two years they gained traction and amazing market share, much bigger than the computers of the time. When you drove around America and visited service stations, they were selling NES games. It went completely mass market. So, we were understandably keen to do NES games, and the first one we did was *Treasure Island Dizzy*, and then we started working on *Micro Machines*, followed by the Game Genie. It was really exciting from a sales point of view because the market was exploding, and from a development point of view it's always interesting working on a new machine and trying to work out how to get the best out of it.

Do you think we'll ever see a return of the days of a hardware manufacturer holding all the cards like Nintendo did?
I don't think so. All the home computers of the period had been based on open architecture, so when Commodore launched the C64 it published the instruction booklet on how it all worked so programmers could work it all out. Because Nintendo was a toy company, they'd been used to selling their own toys – such as stand-alone LCD devices – and nobody else had anything to do with them. That's why they wanted to control it, and not be so open. When Sony came along they thought, 'how can we compete with these guys?' They saw software as more important than hardware, and struck up a much better relationship with developers to get more games and better games, so that people would want to buy their machine over Nintendo's.

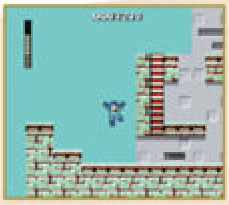
That happened with the PlayStation, and Sony fostered a really good relationship with loads of developers. Apple has taken it one stage further with iOS. They've got tens of thousands of developers now. That has proven that having lots of developer support is a big advantage. I can't see that changing.

You battled Nintendo over the Game Genie and won. What was it like taking on a corporate giant?
We thought the Game Genie was so inventive we'd apply for a patent. We got that patent, licensed it to a toy company, and were really excited about it. And then Nintendo applied to get an injunction to stop the toy company selling it. It's like when a big kid kicks you in the playground, you have to defend yourself. We just defended ourselves and the toy company handled the litigation and eventually won – so we didn't really think too much about it, it was just a case of trying to be creative and then trying to protect that creative freedom.

What are your lasting memories of the NES as a gamer?
Super Mario Bros is one of my all-time favourite games. The attention to detail that Miyamoto and his team put into designing that game was incredible.

Capcom Connection

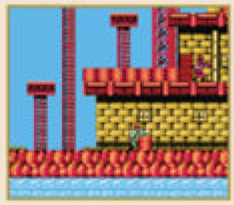
FOUR OF CAPCOM'S FINEST GAMES THAT HELPED DEFINE NINTENDO'S CONSOLE



MEGA MAN

YEAR: 1987

With franchise sales of almost 30 million copies, Mega Man is one of Capcom's most enduring characters, whose life started on Nintendo's 8-bit hardware. Devilishly hard, *Mega Man* is a game which demands skill, memory and unlimited reserves of patience. The character has since starred in over 50 different titles since the release of the Famicom original.



BIONIC COMMANDO

YEAR: 1988

A platform game where the lead character cannot jump might sound like a disaster, but *Bionic Commando*'s unique swinging ability made it stand out from the crowd. The Japanese version of the game was rife with Nazi imagery and even featured a reanimated Adolf Hitler as the final boss – needless to say, these elements were altered for the Western release.



DUCKTALES

YEAR: 1989

Such is the appeal of this platformer that WayForward Technologies is updating it for current generation consoles as we speak. The original was developed by key members of the *Mega Man* team, which goes a long way to explaining the overall level of polish and playability. A sequel followed in 1993 and is now hard to come by, although experts consider it to be a little too similar to the original.



LITTLE NEMO: THE DREAM MASTER

YEAR: 1990

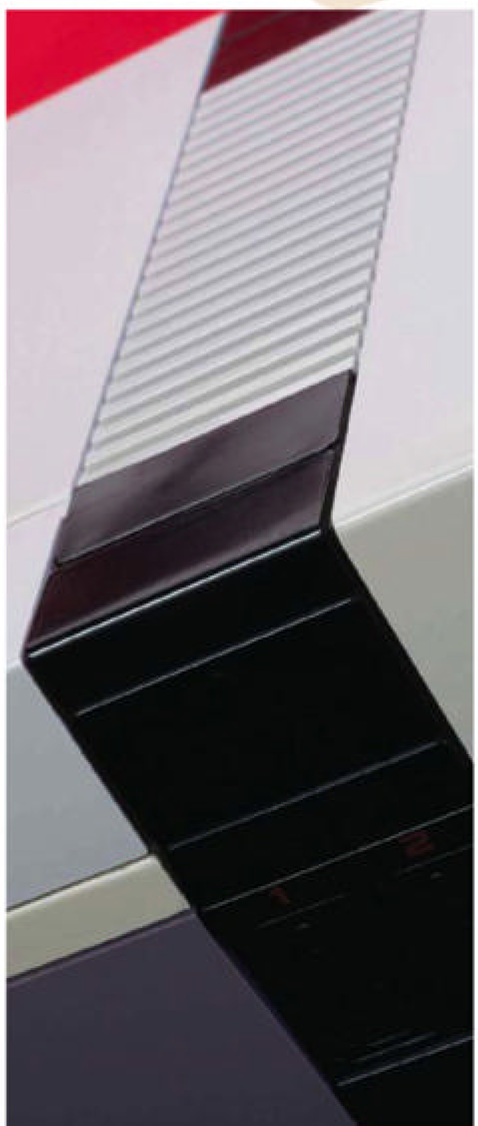
An interesting case of Japanese developers tackling Western stories, *Little Nemo: The Dream Master* was based on a Japanese animated movie, which in turn took inspiration from an American comic strip by Winsor McCay. The result was a charming but often surreal romp through the world of Slumberland, riding on the backs of various animals.

That early success would pale in comparison to the kind of figures Nintendo was posting in 1985. The reason was the launch of Shigeru Miyamoto's *Super Mario Bros*, an iconic 2D platformer that introduced the world to the concept of portly Italian plumbers leaping onto the heads of malevolent mushrooms. The game's impact was dramatic and, in the year following its release, *Super Mario Bros* would help the Famicom sell 3.9 million units in Japan. It was just one of a string of must-have titles for Nintendo's console, and would cement the company's reputation as a creator of truly world-class software.

The astonishing commercial performance of the Famicom allowed Nintendo to create a unique system of software licensing. The model adopted by Atari during the VCS/2600 era was to create all of the games internally but, by the time of the 1983 crash, that system was starting to fracture as third-party publishers like Activision started to appear. Nintendo embraced the talents of companies like Konami, Capcom, Irem, Taito and Namco, but at a considerable price – the Famicom had the market share and these companies wanted to tap into the console's audience, but to do so they had to dance to Nintendo's tune. Publishers were expected to place large production orders for Famicom cartridges and shoulder all of the risk, while Nintendo profited regardless of whether or not the game in question was a good seller.

The system was skewed to benefit Nintendo almost all of the time yet publishers rarely complained, as the Famicom's vast market share meant that gamers were desperate for new titles and quickly snapped up quality software, virtually guaranteeing that any new title would do decent business. Companies like Konami, Hudson Soft and Namco made their fortunes with the 8-bit console. Konami in particular saw its profits rise from $10 million in 1987 to $300 million in 1991 – all as a result of its fruitful relationship with Nintendo and the NES. Not everyone was content to simply roll over and play ball, however. Notoriously proud Namco boss Masaya Nakamura would famously challenge Nintendo's licensing system in 1989, deeming it a 'monopoly' and bad for the long-term health of the burgeoning industry. Yamauchi laughed off his suggestions and publicly mocked Nakamura, and shortly afterwards Namco quietly re-signed its licensing deal – such was the size of the audience that the Famicom offered, even its disgruntled business partners couldn't afford to not have its games on the system. The Famicom accounted for almost the entire Japanese games market at the time; in effect, videogaming in Japan *was* Nintendo. It shrugged off the attack from Sega's SG-1000 and Mark III systems – the latter known in the West as the Sega Master System – in the same manner an elephant would swat away an irritating fly.

In Japan, titles like *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Quest* went beyond being something you just played on your games console. The nation's youth would clamour for information about the game, buying copies of magazines like *Shukan Shonen Jump* which ran regular articles detailing secrets, tactics and folklore from the *Dragon Quest* series. These publications had circulations that crept into the millions, largely based on the fact that they gave plenty of pages to the latest Famicom titles. Ever savvy to new ways of making cash, Nintendo encouraged such cross-promotion,



knowing that for each additional magazine it helped shift, the potential lay for increased videogame software sales.

Not all of Nintendo's big money making ideas came to fruition, of course. The Famicom Disk System was launched in 1986 for a pricey 15,000 Yen, and was an early misstep for the then industry leader. This add-on device was dangled in front of consumers with the promise of cheaper software prices and better titles. Games came on diskettes which retailed for less than carts, with the bonus of being reusable – you could visit a Disk System kiosk at your local retailer and have a new game recorded onto one of your existing disks for a nominal fee. Nintendo made the product even more desirable by stating that all of its best games would be exclusive to the format. *The Legend of Zelda*, *Kid Icarus* and *Metroid* were all released on the Famicom Disk System first, although cartridge ports came later, largely because the system was not as successful as Nintendo had first envisaged.

The new disks split the market. Publishers didn't like having to make the choice between releasing a game on the Famicom Disk System or standard cartridges, and of course would have to pay additional licensing fees if they decided on supporting both. Nintendo overstepped the mark by insisting that it held half of the rights to each game published on Famicom Disk System – something which didn't apply to Famicom titles, and illustrates just how arrogant the firm had become. To cap it off, the unit suffered from crippling reliability issues. The rubber belt used in the disk drive had a tendency to snap or even melt over time and the disks themselves were incredibly delicate – a long way from the robust carts used on the Famicom. Total sales were 4.44 million – nothing to be sniffed at,



Be wise accessorise

THE ZAPPER



■ Bundled with the NES at launch, this iconic light gun was made famous by titles *Duck Hunt* and *Wild Gunman*. Originally coloured grey, it was relaunched in grey and orange. The Famicom version of the gun was based on the design of a revolver.

POWER GLOVE



■ Before the Wii came around and taught everyone how to waggle, Nintendo tried its hand at motion control with the Power Glove peripheral. Created by Grant Goddard and Samuel Cooper Davis for Abrams Gentile Entertainment and licensed to Nintendo, the controller was a commercial disaster.

NES ADVANTAGE



■ This arcade-style controller is notable for getting screen-time in the 1989 movie *Ghostbusters II*, where it was used by the spook-catching protagonists to manipulate the movements of the Statue of Liberty. Its slow-motion feature was unique for the time, but didn't work with all NES games.

U-FORCE

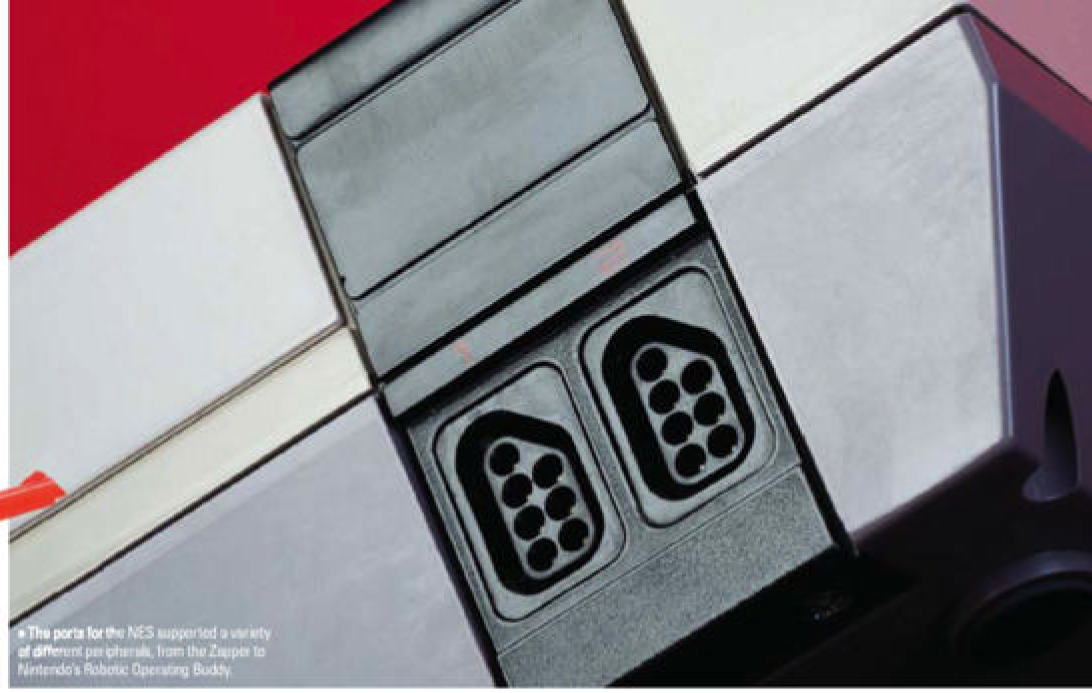


■ The work of publisher Brøderbund, U-Force was a controller that you didn't touch, sort of like a retro version of Kinect. It used infrared sensor panels to identify the position of your hands, but didn't work as planned – games were almost impossible to control properly. A bit like Kinect, then.

ROB



■ Known as the Family Computer Robot in Japan, ROB was instrumental in getting the NES into stores following the 1983 crash. It was short-lived, only functioning with two games: *Stack-Up* and *Gyromite*. Despite its failure, ROB is highly collectable today.



» The ports for the NES supported a variety of different peripherals, from the Zapper to Nintendo's Robotic Operating Buddy.

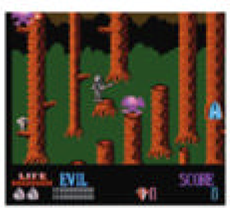
▶ but way below Nintendo's lofty expectations for the console. The add-on never made it out of Japan, but such was the dominance of the Famicom in Japan, its lacklustre performance did little to impact the console's red-hot momentum.

Nintendo's incredible success in its homeland was one thing, but its next move was downright audacious. Following the crash of 1983, videogaming was distinctly out of favour with North American retailers – but Yamauchi knew that it was a vital market to crack and the risk of failure would be balanced by the tantalising chance of massive, massive profits. The Famicom was redesigned for the US market as the Nintendo Entertainment System – NES for short – and was made to resemble a high-tech VCR, complete with a funky-looking spring-loaded cartridge mechanism. Combined with toy-like peripherals, such as ROB and the iconic Zapper, the re-imagined system managed to slip under the radar of retailers still stinging from the collapse of the interactive entertainment market only a couple of years previously. Nintendo's American sales team calmed the nerves of leading stores by offering units on a sale-or-return policy, even going as far as to organise point-of-sale displays, shifting the risk away from the twitchy retail chains. The gamble worked, and while the NES didn't sell in the quantities seen in Japan, the fact that it sold at all proved that there was still a receptive audience for videogaming – the seeds of a revived market in the US had well and truly been sown.

Nintendo had clearly taken note of the many mistakes made by others. The company was

Rare Connection

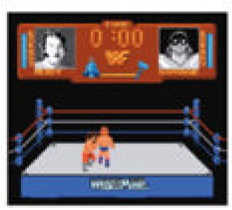
THE EX-SPECTRUM DEVELOPER WAS PROLIFIC ON THE NES MAKING NEARLY 50 GAMES



WIZARDS AND WARRIORS

YEAR: 1987

■ Rare's second outing on the NES, *Wizards & Warriors* received praise for its impressive presentation and stern challenge. Although it boasted action platforming elements, the game also expected players to use their brains to overcome various puzzles and roadblocks. Sequels followed, one of which (*Fortress Of Fear*) graced the portable Game Boy console.



WWF WRESTLEMANIA

YEAR: 1987

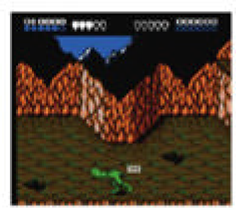
■ Boasting digital representations of all your favourite grapplers – including Hulk Hogan, Andre The Giant and 'Macho Man' Randy Savage – *WWF Wrestlemania* was a smash hit for Rare and publisher Acclaim, the latter of which would oversee the WWF videogame licence for the next decade. Simplistic by today's standards, but still immense fun.



SNAKE, RATTLE 'N ROLL

YEAR: 1990

■ One of Rare's most critically acclaimed NES titles, *Snake, Rattle 'N Roll* is an isometric platformer which tasks the player with consuming enough items to open an exit and progress to the next level. A feat of programming genius on the part of developers Tim Stamper and Mark Betteridge, *Snake, Rattle 'N Roll* is still fondly remembered today and is a must play.



BATTLETOADS

YEAR: 1991

■ A vivid illustration of just how creative the Stamper brothers could be with new design concepts, *Battletoads* was produced at a time when the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* were captivating kids worldwide. A side-scrolling fighter with an emphasis on comedic attacks, it would also be ported to the Sega Mega Drive and Amiga. An excellent take on the scrolling fighter which spawned numerous sequels.



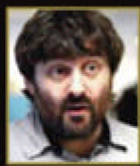
notoriously strict about the quality of software on the NES, concocting the now famous 'Seal Of Quality' which reassured gamers – and their jumpy parents – that the expensive cartridges they were buying weren't going to end up as landfill shortly after purchase. Nintendo of America also limited third-party publishers to just five games a year, a move which caused Konami to create subsidiary Ultra Games – the ploy worked, and the company was able to release ten games per year instead of five. There's no doubt that these companies raged at such limitations behind closed doors but, as was the case in Japan, they were only too happy to abide by Nintendo's rules – mainly because quality software could easily shift over a million units. By imposing such draconian limitations on publishers, Nintendo wanted to ensure that NES software was of the highest possible standard (although there are plenty of stinkers on the system) and companies didn't want to waste one of their five annual games on a lacklustre release.

Peerless support from some of the industry's best developers was just one reason for the success of Nintendo's hardware in the US and Japan. Then, as is the case now, it was first-party software which really pushed the console. Shigeru Miyamoto's *Super Mario Bros* was followed by *Zelda II: The Adventure Of Link*, *Super Mario Bros 2*, *Metroid* and many other exceptional games. By the time the Nineties arrived, Nintendo's aging 8-bit system was installed beneath millions of TV sets all over the world.

Such was the power of the Nintendo brand in the US that the company embarked on an incredible ambitious promotional venture with movie studio Universal Pictures. 1989's *The Wizard* is little more than a 100-minute commercial for the console, and gives prominent screen-time to many of its more popular titles – not to mention the Power Glove peripheral, a failed experiment in bringing motion control to the masses, pre-dating the Wii by a decade and a half. Although the film wasn't a commercial success – which is surprising, given that it starred Fred Savage, who was incredibly popular at the time – it has since become a cult classic and is the first place many keen NES owners caught their initial glimpse of *Super Mario Bros 3*. The game remains the biggest selling piece of non-bundled software the industry had ever seen, shifting an incredible 18 million copies and generating somewhere in the region of $500 million in revenue for its creator. Retailers must have struggled to comprehend the size of the market, a market which ▶

Ste Pickford

ONE HALF OF THE RENOWNED (AND BEARDED) PICKFORD BROTHERS, STE HAS BEEN INVOLVED WITH COUNTLESS CLASSIC TITLES AND NOW RUNS INDIE STUDIO ZEE-3 WITH HIS SIBLING, JOHN



As a developer, what was it like working on the NES hardware?

Initially, it was a nightmare! We'd just come from working on the Amiga and Atari ST, and the NES felt like a relic. As well as the low resolution and tiny flickery sprites, it was bodgy hardware with things like panels on the screen only possible with very shonky cludges.

Then, when we got into the swing of it we realised it was, despite its age, a much better videogame platform than the Amiga or ST. You see, even though it didn't do very much, what it did do was allow you to scroll a screen around and move some sprites around at 60hz, which is what most games really needed. The more 'advanced' graphics of the 16-bit computers weren't matched by the grunt of those machines, so even though NES games weren't as pretty, they were fast and responsive, and the NES controller was way better than any joystick or keyboard available for home computers.

It was an early lesson in frame rate being more important than anything else for playable videogames, and graphics being secondary to feel. A lesson which has since been forgotten by most triple-A game publishers.

What are your thoughts on the system from a gamer's perspective?

There were two important points about the NES from a gamer's perspective. Firstly, the games were insanely expensive. In the UK at least, NES games were £40 at the time when Mastertronic games were on the shelves for £1.99 (and plenty of those were decent games). The price was too high, but the games were on cartridges, and cartridges were really nice things to own. They had instant and reliable loading, which was great.

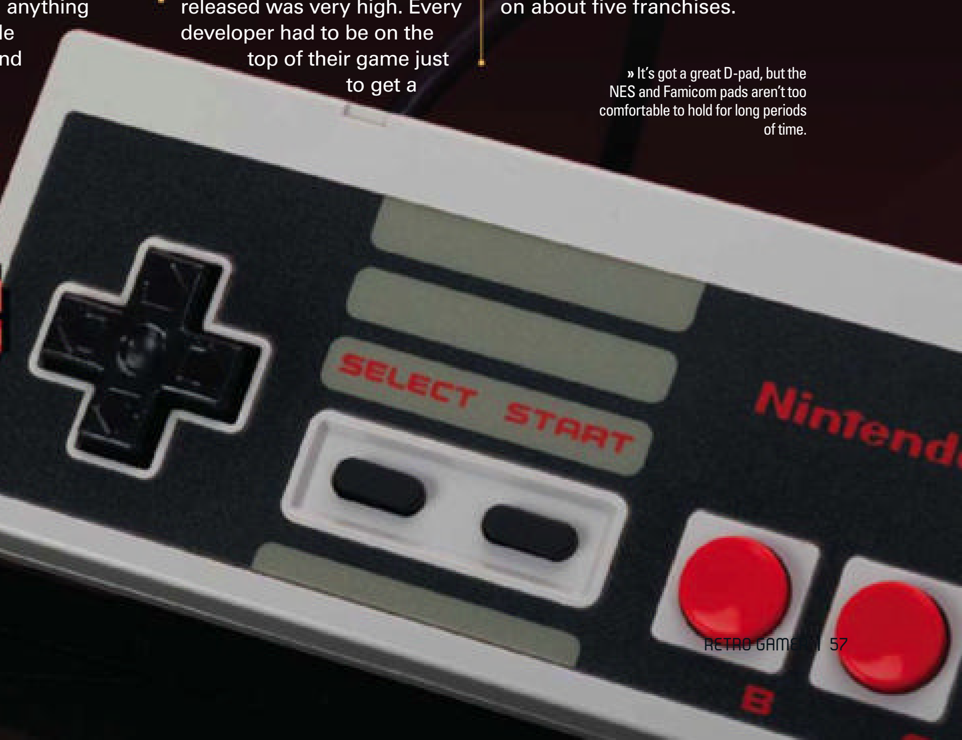
The second thing was that the games were really, really good. Not just the Nintendo games – *Mario*, *Zelda*, etc which were worth £40, if you could afford it – but pretty much every game on the system was actually much, much better than any home computer games at the time. The Nintendo Seal of Quality actually meant something. It was hard to convince Nintendo you were good enough to make a game for their system, and then the quality bar you had to pass just to get a game released was very high. Every developer had to be on the top of their game just to get a game out. Games regularly were non-approved for not being good enough, so we really had to make the best games we possibly could.

So, although the games were very expensive, Nintendo created a system where you could buy any game on the shelf and be certain that it was going to be really good and worth the money. I don't think there's been a system before or since with such a consistently high quality catalogue.

What do you think the system's lasting legacy will be in the industry?

For better or worse the NES defined the console era – the limited, curated game library controlled by a gatekeeper, and a very restricted ability to develop for the platform. That system was copied wholesale by Sony and Microsoft, and we had a few years where it worked well, but I think we're coming to the end of the useful life of that business model. It worked brilliantly for the NES, but it's left us today with a conservative and imploding triple-A console business, locked into timidly producing only a small number of marketing-driven, high-budget glossy sequels based on about five franchises.





» It's got a great D-pad, but the NES and Famicom pads aren't too comfortable to hold for long periods of time.



less than a decade ago had pretty much been at death's door.

One region where the NES's power was curiously ineffective was Europe, and Nintendo seemed reluctant to conquer the territory. This left the door wide open for rival Sega, which released its Master System console to extremely encouraging sales. Despite losing the battle in both Japan and North America, Sega's 8-bit platform had gamers all to itself in Europe. Some gamers were growing tired of their ZX Spectrums and Commodore 64s, and proved to be perfect fodder for this new gaming system fresh out of Japan. Arcade conversions such as *Hang-On*, *Space Harrier* and *Wonder Boy* helped Sega gain a robust foothold, and when the NES was launched in the region in 1987 it had a mountain to climb, despite possessing what was arguably a far superior library of software. Nintendo's lack of enthusiasm for Europe cost it dearly during the 8-bit days, and allowed Sega to build a power base which would pave the way for the 16-bit Mega Drive. However, it goes without saying that the flood of profits in America and Japan more than softened the blow.

The impact and influence of the NES simply cannot be overstated; even after all these years and five generations of new hardware, the console remains a classic system, its collection of games intimately familiar to players who weren't even born when they were released. Franchises like *Zelda*, *Metroid*, *Castlevania*, *Super Mario Bros* and *Mega Man* all found fame on the 8-bit console, and these names continue to be insanely popular even today. *DuckTales*, a classic NES platform title based on a Disney cartoon series, is currently being updated for an entirely new generation as *DuckTales Remastered*, proof of the enduring quality of the NES library. On the Wii U, developer Yacht Club Games is creating *Shovel Knight*, a brand new indie platformer title that wears its NES inspiration proudly on its sleeve. On the 3DS, NES titles are getting a new lease of life thanks to the Virtual Console distribution system, which allows owners to download classic titles from the console's back catalogue.

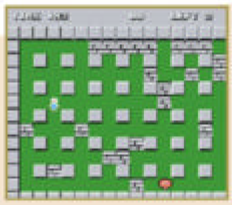
Iconic systems invariably become appealing targets for collectors. The colourful nature of Famicom cartridges – combined with their low cost – has created a thriving second-hand market thanks to online auction sites and retro gaming retailers. The NES is equally popular with those looking to reconnect with their past. That spring-loaded cartridge dock may have caused reliability issues over the years, but the boxy console is arguably one of the finest examples of videogaming retro-chic, and its weird and wonderful menagerie of odd peripherals only adds to its collectibility. Of course, it also helps that many of the format's most popular games are based on franchises which continue to find favour even today. For older players, it's fascinating to see how characters like Mario and Link have evolved as the decades have progressed, while newcomers will be intrigued to see what these famous faces were up to when they made their first tentative steps into videogame superstardom.

Without the NES, the videogame arena would be vastly different today. Nintendo may have kept Japan's best development talent on a tight leash with its grossly unfair licensing agreements, but the incredible profits those same studios made via the Famicom and NES allowed them to become the heavyweight giants of the future – Capcom, Square, Enix and Konami all made their respective fortunes on Nintendo's 8-bit console, and UK studio Rare used the NES to establish a reputation for quality software which would later result in it being purchased by Nintendo itself. However, the dominance of the system, and Nintendo itself, created a less appealing legacy. The licensing system put in place by Yamauchi was almost criminal, yet it is only

Hudson Soft Connection



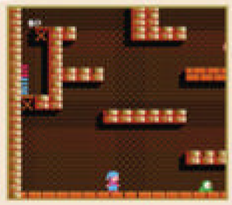
WITH NEARLY 30 GAMES TO CHOOSE FROM IT'S HARD TO PICK FAVOURITES, BUT WE'LL CERTAINLY GIVE IT A GO



BOMBERMAN

YEAR: 1985

Hudson's explosive-loving mascot may have done his best work on the PC Engine, but his first console outing was on Nintendo's 8-bit NES hardware in 1985. With its maze-like structure and addictive gameplay, the series would go on to become one of the medium's most enduring classics. To date, the character has starred in over 70 different games on a wide range of platforms and systems.



MILON'S SECRET CASTLE

YEAR: 1986

Regarded by some players as overly difficult, *Milon's Secret Castle* is nevertheless a cult classic among many NES devotees. Despite the cute visuals and jolly protagonist, this platformer is brutal at times – there are no save points and losing your life results in a game over. It has since been re-released on Nintendo's Virtual Console service, an illustration of its level of fame.



FAXANADU

YEAR: 1987

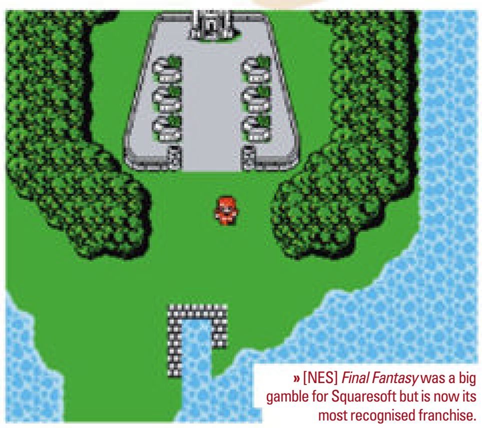
Faxanadu is part of Falcom's Dragon Slayer series – the title is a combination of 'Famicom' and '*Xanadu*', which was the subtitle of the second *Dragon Slayer* release. Best described as an RPG with platforming elements, *Faxanadu* found favour with players thanks to its gripping gameplay, subtle visuals and surprisingly atmospheric music, composed by the hugely talented Jun Chikuma.



PRINCESS TOMATO IN THE SALAD KINGDOM

YEAR: 1988

Something of a cult classic, *Princess Tomato* is a text adventure with vegetables in leading roles. Placed in the role of the brave Sir Cucumber, the player must navigate through various sections of the game using text commands to save Princess Tomato from the clutches of Minister Pumpkin. *Call Of Duty*, you say? Never heard of it.



» [NES] *Final Fantasy* was a big gamble for Squaresoft but is now its most recognised franchise.

> "Shifting an incredible 18 million copies and generating somewhere in the region of $500 million"
>
> SUPER MARIO BROS 3 DID GOOD





Konami Connection

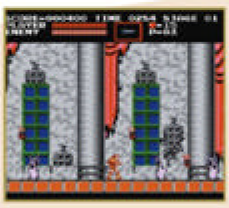
THE JAPANESE DEVELOPER HAD HUGE SUCCESS ON THE NES, RELEASING MANY CLASSIC GAMES



GRADIUS

YEAR: 1986

■ Konami's near-legendary shooter got one of its first domestic ports on the NES, and the game more than lived up to its arcade parent. Crude visuals hide a tricky experience that is harsh but always fair, and boasts a weapons upgrade system that was revolutionary for the time. Controlling the Vic Viper ship, your mission is to eradicate various aliens – some of which resemble 'Moai' statues. Don't ask.



CASTLEVANIA

YEAR: 1987

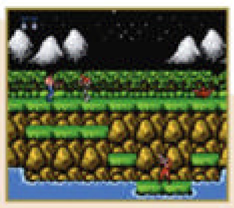
■ Although *Castlevania* appeared on the Famicom Disk System first, under the title *Akumajō Dracula*, it was the American NES port that transformed the series into a household name. Famous for its fantastic music, creepy visuals and punishing challenge, it would be followed by two equally beloved sequels. The series continues to attract a large audience today, thanks to entries on the Xbox 360 and 3DS.



METAL GEAR

YEAR: 1987

■ Hideo Kojima's *Metal Gear* made its debut on the MSX2, but Western players will have been introduced to the franchise by the NES port – a somewhat butchered version of Kojima's original vision. Despite being a less-than-perfect conversion, *Metal Gear* nevertheless gained a positive reaction from many North American gamers, paving the way for future instalments such as *Metal Gear Solid*.



CONTRA

YEAR: 1988

■ Possibly the most famous run-and-gun title in videogame history, *Contra* was an arcade smash in 1987 before being ported to the Famicom and NES in the following year. In Europe, the game would famously be retitled *Probotector*, with the human heroes transformed into robot warriors – a strange trend which would continue until 1996's *Contra: Legacy Of War*, on the PlayStation.

now being torn apart by the arrival of services such as the iOS App Store and Android-based Google Play market, where the power rests with the publishers and developers, and not with the hardware makers.

Of course, at the time, players were less concerned with Nintendo's business practices and more bothered about seeing if they could shoot the dog in *Duck Hunt*, or trying to find all the secret warp zones in *Super Mario Bros 3*. Those lucky enough to have been introduced to the medium of gaming via Nintendo's console are unlikely to forget its incredible impact and influence. It's the platform that enabled a company that started out manufacturing playing cards to straddle the global entertainment arena like a colossus, challenging the brand power of companies like Disney and Pepsi, and matching the movie and music industries in terms of revenue and cultural recognition. Although the gaming market has grown in size dramatically since the Eighties, it's unlikely that any single console format we've seen since will become as intrinsically linked to the medium of interactive entertainment as the NES was. You didn't play games back then, you played Nintendo, and that tells you everything you need to know about how big this console was. Not bad for a system which started out as a rather unassuming slab of white and red plastic in its native Japan.

Future Classic

Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come



INFO

- **Featured System:** Xbox 360
- **Year:** 2010
- **Publisher:** Sega
- **Developer:** PlatinumGames
- **Key People:** Hideki Kamiya (director), Yusuke Hashimoto (producer), Hiroshi Shibata (lead game designer)

GO DEEPER

- ***Bayonetta*** **was the third game in Platinum's original four-title deal with Sega, following** ***Mad World*** **and** ***Infinite Space*** **in Japan.**
- **The titular character makes another appearance in Platinum's rough-but-fun 2013 brawler** ***Anarchy Reigns*****.**

35.



» [Xbox 360] Later boss battles mix up the grandiose with those that require a more tactical touch.

BAYONETTA

The Devil May Cry creator's return to pure action games was anything but an anti-climax, setting rules for the genre that will apply for many years to come…

THE BACKGROUND

In 2006, Capcom closed Clover Studio, composed of some of the best talent from the Japanese publisher and developer of uniquely wonderful games including *Viewtiful Joe*, *God Hand* and *Okami*. After Clover went, PlatinumGames emerged shortly thereafter, an independent studio that came out of the gate with a four-game Sega deal in May 2008.

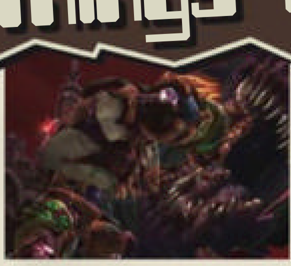
However, there's another intriguing part to *Bayonetta*'s history before we go any further. Hideki Kamiya, creator of *Devil May Cry* and one of the directors at Platinum, reportedly wasn't offered the opportunity to create *Devil May Cry 2* back when it was greenlit in 2001. Years later, when Platinum was created, one of Kamiya's co-workers on *Devil May Cry*, Yusuke Hashimoto, discussed the idea of Kamiya making another action game, a game that eventually became *Bayonetta*.

Kamiya wanted to make something pure within the genre, yet somewhat mainstream at the same time. In terms of creating the unusually designed character herself, Kamiya describes Bayonetta as his ideal woman "in many ways." He aimed to make the game as original as he could, though he acknowledged that there would be quite a few similarities with *DMC*, and played about half of the mildly disappointing 2008 sequel *Devil May Cry 4* for the purposes of research. Essentially though, *Bayonetta* was entering a bit of a dead landscape when it came to 3D hack-and-slash games, as *DMC* stagnated, leaving Platinum to easily set the precedent with almost no competition.

THE GAME

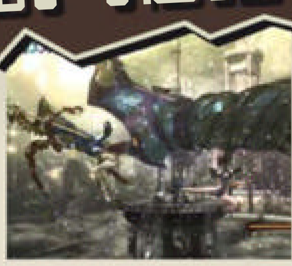
Bayonetta feels like it accurately encapsulates the status of its creators at the time it was made. Platinum was formed from the ashes of Clover and allied itself with Sega. This game is rife with gleeful references to both companies and their legacies in terms of gameplay ideas, visual cues and even conversational asides. This represented the new peak of the 3D

Things of note



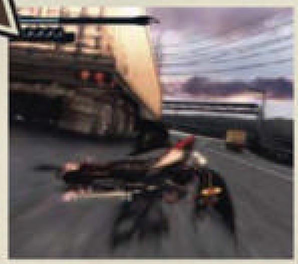
PlayStation fail

The PS3 version of *Bayonetta* was notably worse than the one released on Xbox 360, with a poor frame rate that doesn't exactly gel with its precise mechanics.



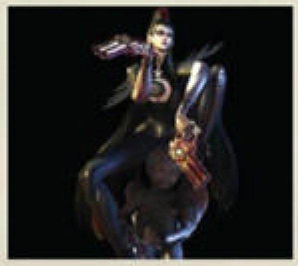
Hair today, gone tomorrow

Bayonetta's one weakness comes in the way it portrays the main character – it's far from forward-thinking, having all her hair rip off at every available moment.



Burn notice

One of the many retro-friendly references in *Bayonetta* is the matching music in both Chapter 8 and 14's respective *After Burner* and *Space Harrier* parodies.



Fly Me To The Moon

One of *Bayonetta*'s more charming motifs is its use of *Fly Me To The Moon*, which is revamped into a pop-infused action theme, while the closing credits feature a 1963 Brenda Lee version.

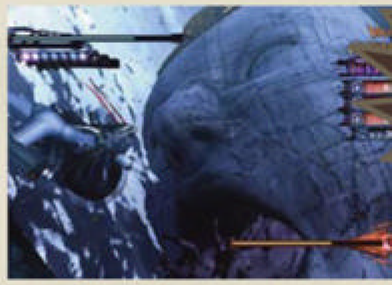


Bayonetta on Wii U

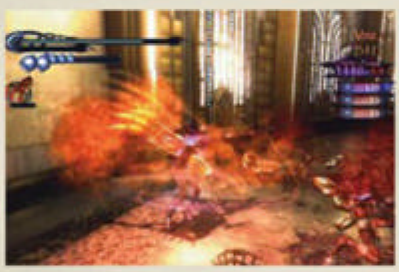
Bayonetta 2 has been gestating for a very long time. Last year it was announced as a Wii U exclusive, which should be interesting given the original game's target audience.



» [Xbox 360] The QTE moves in the game always conjure up some interesting imagery.

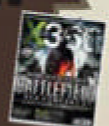


» [Xbox 360] Giant faces on the end of things are a mainstay of *Bayonetta*'s larger character designs.



» [Xbox 360] The best arsenal in *Bayonetta* is undoubtedly the one that you accumulate yourself.

What the press thought



X360
Score: 9/10
"Tough for the many but heaven for the few, *Bayonetta* soundly trumps the *Devil May Cry* franchise as the Xbox 360's prime hack-and-slash action game. We eagerly wait for more".



games™
Score: 9/10
"Ping-ponging from the sublime to the ridiculous with sass, style and a potty mouth, *Bayonetta* is a ten-hour journey into both the obscenely brilliant and the brilliantly obscene".

hardcore action genre that Kamiya himself pioneered, and became a genuine cult hit in a console generation that was unfortunately bereft of them.

Bayonetta's bizarre universe of angelic creatures is basically incomprehensible, but its array of gargantuan freaky creatures, gravity-defying celestial dimensions and odd real-world gothic city bits gives it a feeling of unpredictability. More than Kamiya's other games, *Bayonetta* makes strides in variety, throwing caution to the wind and laying a set piece in front of you if it makes the pacing better. This is how you can find yourself going from an exhilarating motorbike chase on a sprawling urban highway to running away from a boulder made of Lego bricks. Not every level relies on mastery of the fighting mechanics, which is refreshing, and the design holds up well as *Bayonetta* takes inspiration from different genres.

This is because being Bayonetta is so fun, which is illustrated by the loading screens that allow you to practice combos. Like *Mario* or *Zelda*, just playing *Bayonetta* without any enemies or environments surrounding you is enjoyable and, like *Devil May Cry 3* – the highlight of that series – you feel your instinctive use of the controls manifests itself perfectly on-screen. The sense of feedback is great, yet the gradually expanding range of weaponry offers wonderful replay value too, throwing in different types of blades and firearms that reward the perseverance required to unlock them.

In short, it allows your experience of *Bayonetta* to evolve and become perfected as you master its highly technical combat system. You start the game with basic kick and gun attacks; you end your second playthrough ice-skating your way through levels with a rocket launcher that's bigger than your character. Each weapon is buried away, yet informs the rhythm of combat in a different fashion. It's wonderful, with a contrasting flavour to *Devil May Cry* that aptly sets the series apart.

And then, perhaps most **Retro Gamer**-friendly of all, it piles on the references to other superb games. *Bayonetta* really does exist in that sweet spot between Capcom and Sega and allows us to enjoy it, referencing Dr Eggman in its opening level and managing to crowbar in callbacks to *Resident Evil 2*, *Viewtiful Joe*, *Devil May Cry* and *Okami* in just one line of dialogue, as foolish sidekick Luka (himself likely a cheeky reference to *Assassin's Creed*) reels off a list of his Capcom-themed ex-girlfriends. Your in-game currency is *Sonic*-like rings. Your shop representative, Rodin, breaks the fourth wall and directly quotes the infamous merchant from *Resident Evil 4*. Bayonetta herself even turns into a dog that leads a trail of dead flowers, a parallel of Amaterasu in *Okami*. This game wants hardcore players to love it, and Platinum works awfully hard to earn that affection, both with these cursory nods and by displaying its trademark skill in hack-and-slash design.

Why it's a future classic

Bayonetta was always destined to divide opinion more than the *Devil May Cry* games, which at least had more of a mainstream-friendly visual hook in both the design of its protagonist and the more familiar supernatural setting. This, on the other hand, represents Platinum's willingness to be utterly weird and specific. They have created a character deliberately unlike others in the medium, as well as a surrounding world that offers the scope to do pretty much anything in terms of level design.

Therefore, Kamiya's *Bayonetta* is a much more ambitious action game than the original *Devil May Cry*, contemporising the action genre in its own way while Capcom went in a different direction with that series. Platinum created something just for the hardcore gamer, celebrating the history of its creators as well as its publisher, Sega, for which this was certainly one of its best games in years.

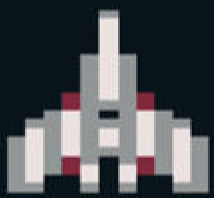
MASTERTRONIC





KINGS OF THE BUDGET FRONTIER





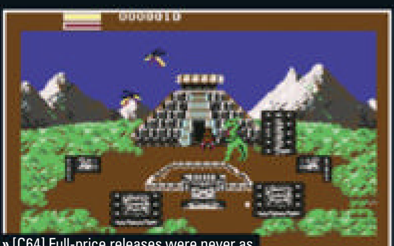
30 years ago, a revolution in videogame software began with Mastertronic at the helm. Graeme Mason chats to some of the key people who helped create a budget behemoth

It's 1983. You are standing in a shop, probably one of the major chains on the high street such as WHSmith or Boots. There are rows and rows of bright and shiny cassette cases. Within any one of them could be the videogame of your dreams. You have two crisp one pound notes. What now?

The truth is, if it were 1983, you'd probably go home empty handed. Why? Because, believe it or not, this was an era when budget software hardly existed. The cheapest game you could purchase was generally a minimum of five pounds, with prices reaching an eye-watering ten quid. Fortunately, a small band of entrepreneurs – fresh from the buoyant video industry – formed a partnership in this year that would ease the pain of those school kids on a tight budget – which, let's face it, was most of us.

Their names were Martin Alper, Frank Herman, Terry Medway and Alan Sharam, four men with virtually no experience of the game software market, but outstanding knowledge and contacts in the fields of marketing and distribution – and they had a plan. The men had joined forces, following a meeting convened by Martin and Frank, in order to generate interest in a new company specialising in games distribution. Its first home, the basement of Alan's existing business (a surveying and property company) on George Street in London, would become the spiritual beginning of this low-price revolution.

But back to the plan, which would contain two vital tenets. Firstly, and most importantly, was the price. The men wanted their games to enter the market at an unprecedented level, a level previously thought of as unsustainable by other software houses of the time, with the theory being that the low cost alone would sell the game. Secondly, they wanted to widen the availability of their games, to sell them at retail locations hitherto alien to computer software. To achieve this, the entrepreneurs turned to someone they already knew from the videocassette business: ex-professional cricketer, Richard Bielby.



» [C64] Full-price releases were never as successful as Mastertronic's budget line. *Aargh!* was also a home conversion of an Arcadia game.

"Frank [Herman] had the rights to sell a particular range of American films and I contacted him in 1982 with a view to selling them into my outlets," begins Richard. "The business expanded quickly, and I began taking on self-employed agents to sell on my behalf throughout the UK." Richard would meet with the avuncular Frank Herman each week to settle his account and collect more stock. The location was often a video shop owned by Martin Alper and Terry Medway, also in George Street, London.

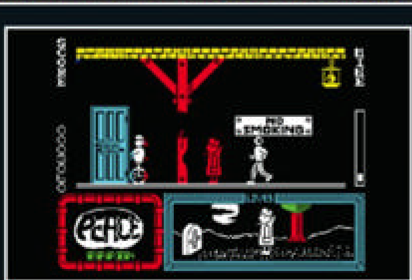
"Towards the end of 1983, Frank asked me if I would also be interested in offering a new proposed range of computer games," says Richard, "and it was suggested they would be a nice extra line to sell during the quieter summer months." And so, a gentleman's



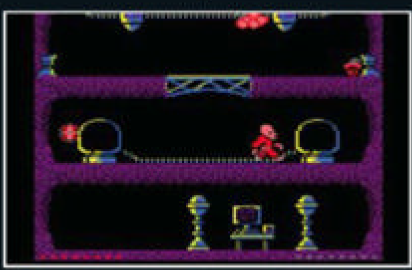
» [Amstrad] *Finders Keepers* was the start of a popular franchise that introduced Magic Knight to gamers.



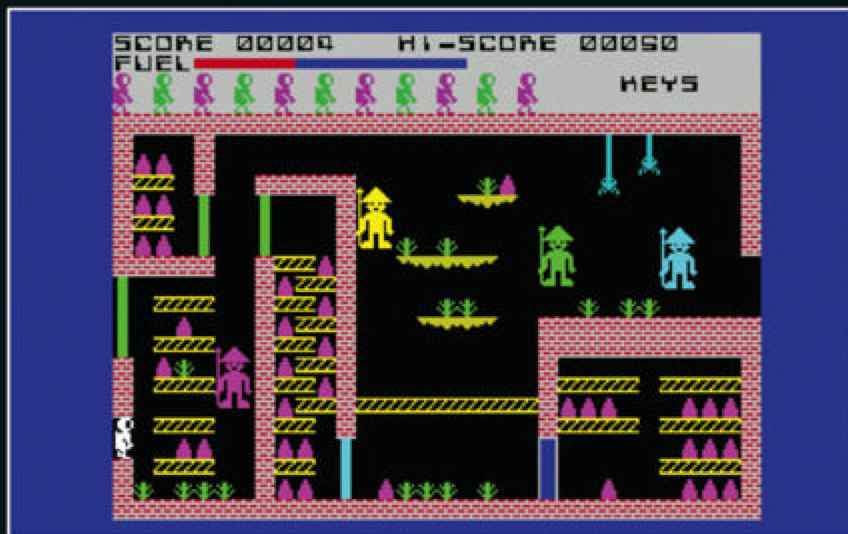
» [C64] The brilliant *Kikstart 2* included a fun course designer.



»[Spectrum] *Agent X* employed a variety of different genres and was a critical and commercial success.



»[Amstrad] The success of *Agent X* led to an inevitable sequel.



» [Spectrum] Of course Mastertronic followed the trend for platform games.

SERIOUSLY COMIC

Two men whose names you probably would not recognise, despite playing a large part in Mastertronic's success, are Mark Brady and John Smyth. These two contrasting artists brought their individual styles to many of Mastertronic's cassette inlays, enticing potential buyers with either Chris Foss-inspired imposing spacecraft (Mark Brady) or rotund comical characters, usually in possession of a manically infectious grin (John Smyth's speciality).



agreement between Richard Bielby and Mastertronic was formed, whereby Richard (with assistance from his wife, Alison) supplied all independent retail outlets. The range was launched on 01 April 1984. "We found that by the end of that first week we had sold in excess of 40,000 games," grins Richard, "and these were sold into garages, newsagents, video and convenience stores." With Mastertronic using self-contained 100-game dealer packs (complete with a counter stand), such outlets lapped up the new product. Conversely, because of the low retail price, the computer game wholesale industry had little or no interest in the games. Richard Bielby's sales operation and Mastertronic was the perfect match. "We didn't really need a clever strategy because the games sold themselves," he notes, "so I saw my role as finding good agents who could offer a first-class and efficient service."

Naturally, Mastertronic still needed developers to write its games, and so had already begun forging alliances with programmers. The first of these was Galactic Software – aka Jim Darling and his two sons, Richard and David – and the siblings were swiftly producing some of Mastertronic's most popular early games. "They were undoubtedly vital – as young kids they were brilliant at turning out very playable games to their peer group in no time," says Richard, "and new titles were the key in those early days." More development partners such as Binary Design and Mr. Chip were also recruited. For these and ▶

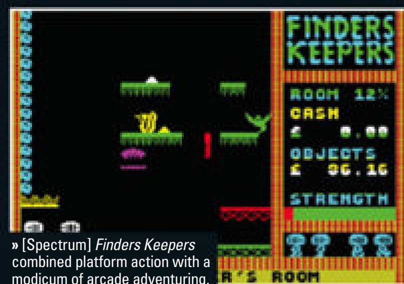
> "We found that by the end of that first week we had sold in excess of 40,000 games"
>
> RICHARD BIELBY ON THE FIRST WAVE OF RELEASES



» [Spectrum] This conversion of the classic arcade machine *Boscoian* was an excellent game.



» [C64] An early Darlings game, the Michael Jackson-inspired *Chiller*.



» [Spectrum] *Finders Keepers* combined platform action with a modicum of arcade adventuring.

INSTANT EXPERT

■ Mastertronic was first formed in 1983 by Frank Herman, Martin Alper, Alan Sharam and Terry Medway.

■ Mastertronic's first release in April 1984 is considered to have been the VIC-20 game, *3D Maze*. Over 30 more titles on various formats appeared over the next three months.

■ The founders were almost proud of their lack of knowledge of games, a weakness that was ultimately exposed with the ill-suitability of the games for the Arcadia project.

■ Unusually for game publishers of the time, Mastertronic owned its own warehouse, although in reality it was 'a dark and probably damp basement' according to Anthony Guter.

■ Re-release *Formula 1 Simulator* sold an astonishing 568,013 copies across the five major computer formats.

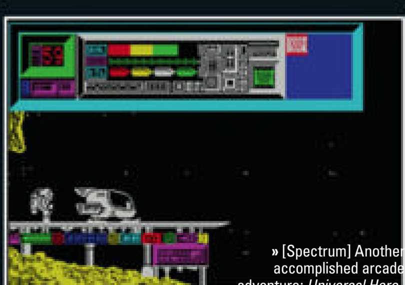
■ Mastertronic recruited Geoff Heath from Melbourne House in 1986; a year later he was reunited with some of his old staff as it also acquired the antipodean software house.

■ The MAD Games range was introduced in October of 1985 with an extravagant party on the River Thames. *The Last V8*, *Master Of Magic*, *Spellbound* and *Hero Of The Golden Talisman* were demonstrated by their respective programmers to the gaming press.

■ Mastertronic created budget labels in conjunction with other software houses such as Rack-it (Hewson) and Americana (US Gold).

■ There were a number of sub-labels from the £1.99 range, such as *Master Adventurer*, which were developed with slightly different labels and logos. Mastertronic also experimented with video (Mastervision) and music (Mastersound).

■ In 1968, Nottinghamshire all-rounder Richard Bielby was next man in when Sir Garfield Sobers smashed six sixes in one over off the unfortunate Malcolm Nash.



» [Spectrum] Another accomplished arcade adventure: *Universal Hero*.



other solo efforts, Mastertronic's games buyer was John Maxwell, who would contact any prospective young coder in order to propose a deal. Such deals varied, but generally Maxwell would offer an up-front fee followed by royalties per unit sold, usually five or ten pence.

Working with the Darlings was 18-year old Alison Beasley, who also moved across to the budget publisher in 1984 as the young coders became part of the Mastertronic operation, performing in the role of evaluating new submissions. Alison herself would soon also have a vital part to play, as she explains: "When I first joined I did a bit of anything – reception, paperwork, taking orders and more – but it wasn't long before I suggested they do a newsletter for their customers and they let me have a go." The newsletter was a success and prompted Alison to ask Mastertronic's founders if she could try her hand at public relations as well. "They were very supportive and encouraging – in the way that true entrepreneurs are." Alison's role expanded with encouragement from Martin Alper – she soon became involved in marketing, artwork and presentations, including trips to computer game fairs and forming a bond with the ever-growing batch of game



magazines. This latter task would test her new skills considering Mastertronic's advertising budget: "They didn't believe it was a good way to spend their money – and I think they were right," ponders Alison, "as efforts went instead into getting the best product they could and supporting the retailers with the racking systems and blister packs." As to the magazines themselves, with Alison in regular contact and promoting the latest games, Mastertronic would eventually build a good relationship with the press. "Although it was often about them *not* reviewing a game – if I thought it was a stinker – than about actually reviewing it!" she laughs.

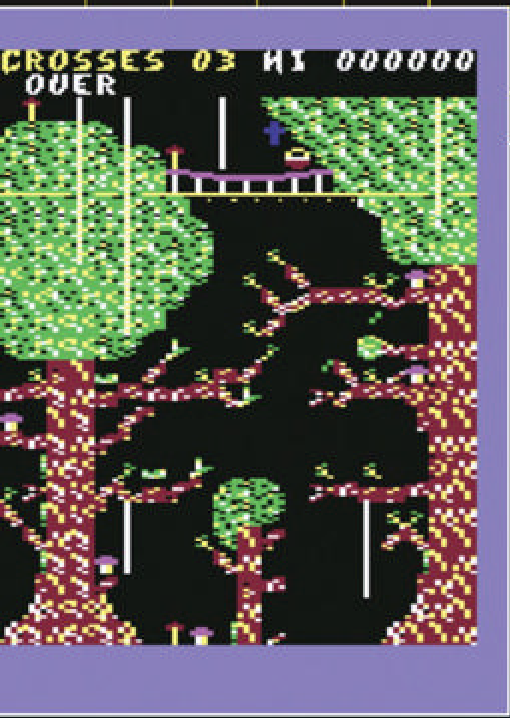
TIMELINE

1983
MASTERTRONIC IS FORMED, WORKING FROM THE BASEMENT OF AN OFFICE ON GEORGE STREET, LONDON.

1984
THE COMPANY OFFICIALLY BEGINS TRADING ON 01 APRIL. THE FIRST £1.99 GAMES BEGIN TO APPEAR AND IN DECEMBER, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BEAU JOLLY, MASTERTRONIC BEGINS DISTRIBUTION OF ITS COMPILATIONS OF OLD IMAGINE SOFTWARE GAMES. THE COMPANY MOVES TO A FLAT ON ST. JOHN'S ROAD.

1985
ANTHONY GUTER JOINS MASTERTRONIC AFTER SPOTTING AN ADVERT IN THE FINANCIAL TIMES. IN SEPTEMBER, THE COMPANY MOVES TO BIGGER OFFICES ON PAUL STREET, NEAR MOORGATE. THE MASTERTRONIC ADDED DIMENSION (MAD) LABEL BEGINS, SELLING GAMES AT A SLIGHTLY HIGHER £2.99.

1986
MARTIN ALPER DEPARTS TO THE STATES TO SET UP MASTERTRONIC US WHILE INDUSTRY VETERAN, AND FORMER MELBOURNE HOUSE BOSS, GEOFF HEATH JOINS THE UK OPERATION. MASTERTRONIC SUBSEQUENTLY PURCHASE THE SOFTWARE HOUSE FROM HOLDING COMPANY BEAM SOFTWARE.





» [Amstrad] Why don't more games have silly names like *Werewolves Of London*?

> "They didn't believe it was a good way to spend their money – and I think they were right"
> ALISON BEASLEY ON MASTERTRONIC'S RETICENCE TO ADVERTISE

We have formed a picture of the operation of Mastertronic, but what of its enigmatic founders? Frank Herman still involved himself with many facets of the business while Alan Sharam concentrated on sales and distribution. Terry Medway, as co-owner with Martin Alper of the original video shop on the street where Mastertronic ostensibly began, sold his share of the company early on, while Martin himself jetted across the Atlantic in 1986 to set up Mastertronic in the United States. Joining in 1985 was Anthony Guter, a much-needed recruit for the accounts department, and a year later Ron Harris, head-hunted by Frank Herman from Argus Press Software to facilitate the continual supply of games. Ron joined the company as it was entering its most successful period, and essentially filled the hole left vacant by the departing Darlings, who had decided to create their own software house. "The atmosphere was very much one of aggressive growth," he recalls, "and it was a vibrant and expanding company. Yet formal systems came very much second to getting it done." This was demonstrated palpably to Ron when it came to his first task at Mastertronic: organising the office partitioning for his new development department. "I had asked for an office and was told, if I wanted one, to go and build it," he smiles, "and when it was finished, Frank wandered in, looked around, said 'I'd have built it bigger' and left…" Ron and his team proved crucial to Mastertronic, sifting through 'letterbox' submissions for suitable games, then hunting out bugs and building master tapes, often as many as 20 a week.

By 1987, the games market was changing rapidly. Full-price 8-bit software was dying, replaced by a booming budget industry that was also destined to be short-term. After several years of practically owning the low-price games market, Mastertronic suddenly found extreme competition thanks to rivals Codemasters, Firebird, Players and Alternative – in addition to full-price publishers such as Ocean and Elite concocting their own budget labels to re-release back-catalogue games. Mastertronic began doing the same, re-releasing classic titles on its Ricochet label, initially with games owned by Melbourne House (which it had recently purchased) and then other third-party titles, including a phenomenally successful re-release of Activision's excellent *Ghostbusters*.



» [C64] *Gaplus* was an excellent arcade conversion, but a poor seller.

Anthony Guter credits Frank Herman for spotting that Sega Corporation lacked a UK distributor for its upcoming Master System console. Mastertronic quickly applied, and would also soon become Sega's distributors in France and Germany. The birth of Sega Europe, and subsequent slowing down of Mastertronic's publishing business, had begun. Yet, thanks to its purchase of Melbourne House and a considerable investment in the ill-fated Arcadia project (a series of arcade machines based on Commodore Amiga chips that was run from the US and resulted in a significant loss), Mastertronic were left exposed. This apparent susceptibility was recognised by Richard Branson's Virgin group and a merger was declared in 1988. Were Virgin interested in the software side, keen to gain a bigger footprint in the UK sales market? Or were they more interested in Mastertronic's recently-acquired rights to distribute Sega products?

1987 A BUSY YEAR SEES MASTERTRONIC BID TO BECOME SEGA'S DISTRIBUTOR FOR ITS NEW MASTER SYSTEM CONSOLE. LATER, RICHARD BRANSON'S VIRGIN GROUP PURCHASES 45% OF MASTERTRONIC WHICH IS RENAMED MASTERTRONIC GROUP LTD AND LATTERLY VIRGIN MASTERTRONIC. 1987 ALSO SEES THE DEBUT OF THE BULLDOG LABEL, FOR ORIGINAL GAMES WITH A BRITISH SLANT, WHILE RICOCHET CONCENTRATED ON RE-RELEASING OLDER CLASSICS. ENTERTAINMENT USA IS ANOTHER NEW LABEL, INTRODUCED TO PROMOTE THE WORK OF AMERICAN CODERS.

1988 MASTERTRONIC MOVE FROM PAUL STREET TO THE VIRGIN OFFICES OFF OF PORTABELLO ROAD, A SYMBOLIC BEGINNING-OF-THE-END FOR ITS BUDGET LINE.

1991 SEGA EXPRESSES AN INTEREST IN BUYING OUT VIRGIN MASTERTRONIC; THE TAKEOVER BEGINS AND THE PUBLISHING SIDE REMAINS WITH VIRGIN, SUBSEQUENTLY RENAMED VIRGIN INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT.

1992 SEGA OPENS ITS LONDON HEADQUARTERS, ABSORBING VIRGIN MASTERTRONIC IN THE PROCESS. EVENTUALLY, VIRGIN PULLS OUT OF THE BUDGET GAME BUSINESS AND THE MASTERTRONIC NAME DISAPPEARS UNTIL…

2003 MANUFACTURING, PACKAGING AND DISTRIBUTION COMPANY THE PRODUCERS ACQUIRES THE MASTERTRONIC NAME FROM SEGA.

2013 MASTERTRONIC LIVES ON TODAY. DESPITE NOT ACTUALLY BEING RELATED TO THE ORIGINAL COMPANY, IT RETAINS KEY ELEMENTS FROM THE CLASSIC BUDGET PRODUCER.



» [C64] Horizontal shoot-'em-up *Energy Warrior.*

A combination of both, perhaps leaning slightly more towards the latter is the probable truth – a deal for both the present and future.

Before the takeover, significant staff changes had already taken place; the Bielbys and Mastertronic had parted ways in 1986, as its reputation had earned it newfound friends in the wholesale distribution sector. Despite this, Richard soon found another partner keen to exploit his network of agents in Codemasters, set up ironically by Mastertronic's ex-ace programmers – the Darling brothers. Meanwhile, Alison Beasley soldiered on before also leaving in 1987 ("I was young and in love and left to go travelling. I got as far as Stratford-upon-Avon…") and Ron Harris, recognising that his role was likely to be severely diminished in the near future, departed to start his own business. Despite this, a replacement was hired for Ron. Joining Mastertronic in 1988 was Andrew Wright (who had previously helped set up Thalamus for Newsfield in 1986), an appointment that reunited him with his former Activision boss Geoff Heath who was now heading up the newly-merged Virgin Mastertronic. Andrew soon realised that the 8-bit market was becoming dominated by re-releases of previously full-priced games. Eventually, he oversaw the inception of Mastertronic's 16-bit budget range 16 Blitz, which offered Amiga and Atari ST games at a mere £4.99. Unfortunately, budget games of sufficient quality for these formats proved difficult to source, and the line never came close to emulating the success of the mid-Eighties. However, the move to disc based systems did mean it was able to acquire publishing rights to some of the excellent text adventures from Infocom such as *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* and the *Zork* series – although budget re-releases of arcade conversions such as *Double Dragon* and *Roadwars* were predictably the biggest sellers for Virgin Mastertronic's 16-bit range.



» [Amstrad] Another of coder Stephen Curtis' efforts: *Into Oblivion.*

"We became very fond of Frank Herman – he was brilliant at solving problems"

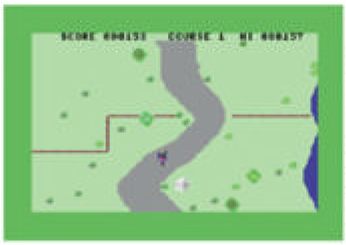
RICHARD BIELBY ON "UNCLE" FRANK

Eventually, in 1991, Sega began planning for bases of operation in Europe and the UK and the absorption of Virgin Mastertronic. The Japanese giant had no interest in the game publishing side – this would be retained by Virgin and the remaining clutch of programmers and staff rebranded into Virgin Interactive Entertainment (VIE). The two UK-based owners of Mastertronic, Frank Herman and Alan Sharam, took on important posts within Sega as deputy MD of Sega Europe and MD of Sega UK respectively. Many of the Virgin Mastertronic staff such as Anthony Guter joined Sega, while Andrew Wright remained with Virgin until he too



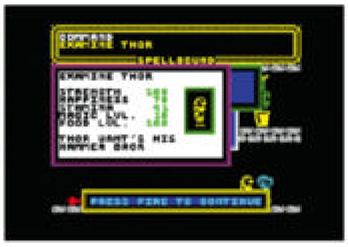
» [Spectrum] *Chronos* was an entertaining, if short, shoot-'em-up from the Tatlock brothers.

DEFINING GAMES



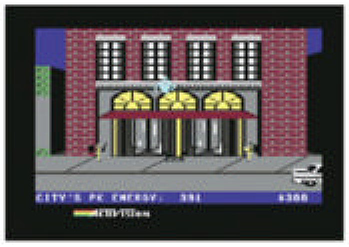
BMX Racers

Galactic Software, aka the Darlings, was Mastertronic's developer of choice on the Commodore 64 during its early days, producing several big hits for both the original and MAD lines. *BMX Racers* was one of its first and set in motion a trend, when the Darlings' realised that games with popular themes sold the best, something that would continue once they began Codemasters in 1987. The game was a vertically scrolling overhead racer, which was simple, yet professionally produced and nicely playable, offering fine value for £1.99. The game produced semi-sequels in both name (*BMX Trials*) and gameplay (*Dark Star*).



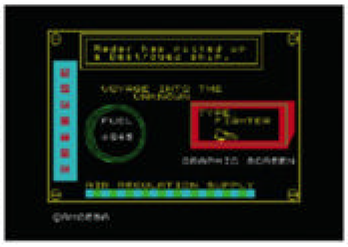
Spellbound

Finders Keepers may have begun the story, and *Knight Tyme* may have been more popular with kids brought up on *Star Wars*, but it was this game in the *Magic Knight* trilogy that not only cemented a new £2.99 Mastertronic Added Dimension label but also introduced the world to Windowmation. Author David Jones drastically re-tooled *Finders Keepers*, transforming the competent, if unremarkable, platformer into a stunning arcade adventure that gained Mastertronic its first brushes with critical acclaim. *Spellbound* secured both a *Crash* Smash and *Zzap* sizzler with scores of 95% and 94% respectively – all for a penny shy of three quid.



Ghostbusters

Mastertronic had been re-releasing games for years with titles such as *Formula 1 Simulator*, *Chuckman* and *Black Crystal* acquired when fellow publishers exited the business. However, when Mastertronic began its Ricochet label in 1987, the calibre of games – while still old – improved significantly. *Way Of The Exploding Fist* (which Mastertronic gained the rights to when they purchased Melbourne House) sold a creditable 182,000 copies. But, it was Activision's 1984 film license that became the outstanding success for the label selling over 400,000 copies, ensuring it became a staple of Eighties software eBay bundles for years to come.



Voyage Into The Unknown

We can already hear 1,000 of cups of tea being spat out. *Which* game? The truth is, no game better demonstrated the success of Mastertronic than this dreadful Spectrum effort released in its early days. *Voyage Into The Unknown* boasted an impressive cover by Mark Brady and an evocative tale on the cassette inlay. Yet, its oblique 'gameplay' meant the game notched a distinctly singular 9% in *Crash*, a score that failed to prevent just shy of 24,000 Speccy owners taking a punt on it. Impressive sales of games such as this, *Formula 1 Simulator* and *Alien Kill*, created the foundation for Mastertronic to become the market force it did in the mid-to-late Eighties.

joined Sega in 1992. The Mastertronic name, perhaps thanks to an emotional attachment from the original owners, followed Frank Herman and Alan Sharam to Sega, where it remained dormant for many years. Unable to use the famous name, VIE rebranded its budget label as Tronix, but the market had changed forever and it was short-lived. With Sega having little interest in publishing software under the Mastertronic banner, it appeared that this was the end for the famous logo and brands.

In 2003, distribution company The Producers purchased the Sold Out software label and acquired the Mastertronic name from Sega. Then, in 2004, in a fitting move, it appointed Frank Herman as chairman. The rejuvenated original Mastertronic, in addition to the MAD line, lives on, mainly selling re-releases of PC software. But what do those who were involved in its original incarnation think led to its success? Richard Bielby cites one man above all. "We became very fond of Frank Herman – he was brilliant at solving problems and had a knack of putting the right people together to get the job done. Being with Mastertronic was exciting and it gave me a huge buzz to be part of a team who were trying out something completely new and making a fantastic success of it. But there is no doubt in my mind that the real brains behind the operation was 'uncle' Frank Herman." Alison Beasley also has a fondness for her time at Mastertronic. "It was fantastic and I loved every minute. Jim [Darling] had already been a great mentor – at Mastertronic I had the added benefit of four more mentors," she remembers with a smile. "And although I earned peanuts, I learned so much from all the guys – they were smart, funny, crazy, driven, fair, outspoken, fearless and generous. Great guys – and great times."

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Frank Herman: After the Sega takeover, 'Uncle' Frank became deputy managing director of Sega Europe. In 2004 he became chairman of the new Mastertronic, purchased from Sega by The Producers. Sadly, Frank died in 2009.

Richard & Alison Bielby: After leaving in 1986, Richard and Alison worked with Codemasters and Firebird before a brief return to Mastertronic on a consultancy basis. They left the games industry in the early Nineties, Alison to begin selling bespoke skiing holidays, Richard to start a wholesale company specialising in rare alpine and other hardy garden plants. Today they live in Brittany where Alison still sells holidays and Richard enjoys retirement.

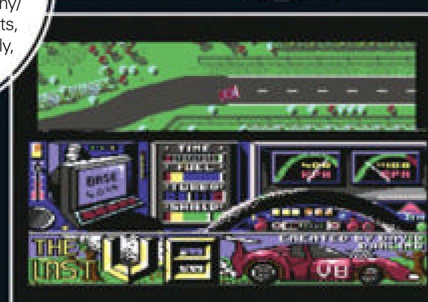
Alan Sharam: Like Frank Herman, Alan joined Sega post-takeover and took up a position as managing director of Sega UK. Alan passed on in 2012.

Alison Beasley: Alison remained in public relations, setting up her own company specialising in PR for game developers, Lincoln Beasley, in 1995. She also runs an online baking store: www.flourbin.com

Martin Alper: Martin remained with Virgin Interactive for several years, running their operation from the United States. He has been involved with various internet development and software companies since the early 2000s.

Ron Harris: Post-Mastertronic, Ron ran his own business for a few years before moving back into games by managing studios for Sony/Psygnosis, Electronic Arts, Codemasters and latterly, Monumental Games.

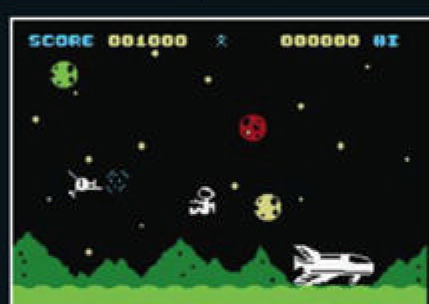
Andrew Wright: Andrew left the UK in 1998 and, a brief spell as a producer at Krome Studios apart, has mostly been involved with internet marketing since.



» [C64] *The Last V8* was one of the final games the Darling brothers produced for Mastertronic.



» [Amstrad] Taking advantage of the far-eastern craze.



» [MSX] An early game on the MSX: *Spacewalk*.

THE UNCONVERTED

Arcade games that never made it home

GUNFORCE 2

■ **Developer:** Irem ■ **Year:** 1994 ■ **Genre:** Run-and-gun

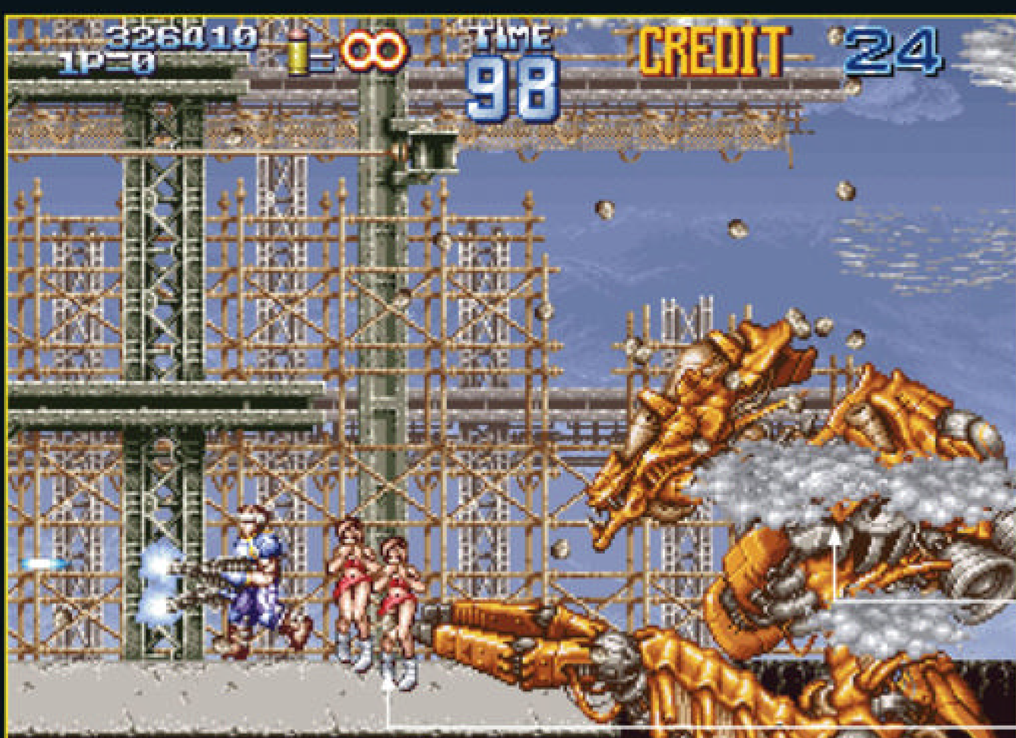
■ **In Issue 98 of Retro Gamer the director of *Metal Slug*, Kazuma Kujo, admitted that the staff on Irem's *GunForce 2* (aka *Geo Force* in Japan) were largely similar to those on *In The Hunt* and *Metal Slug* – his colleagues, as he put it. Unwilling to reveal their names, and without a credit listing on completion, we'll likely never know who made one of the greatest arcade run-and-guns ever seen. Let's be honest here, it's (possibly) better than *Contra*, *In The Hunt*, and most of the *Metal Slug* games. You just don't realise it yet, because it's a fairly rare arcade exclusive.**

Everything about *GunForce 2* screams 'more'; it's a relentless bad-ass cacophony of wailing guitars, alien bikers and sexy babes. Instead of carrying just one gun each player carries two, with a multitude of power-ups available, including missiles, lasers and flamethrowers. Instead of just one vehicle, like the later released *Metal Slug*, there's around ten you can ride on, including a motorbike section where you're chased by a mechanical centipede. The controls are also supremely more versatile, allowing you to fire in multiple directions, climb walls and cling to chains, ceilings and attack choppers.

Like most good arcade titles it presents increasingly wilder situations to keep the credits flowing. The game explosively starts with players on a moving train, while freaky mutants on bikes ride by and leap aboard, debris flying everywhere. Later on you take down a factory of robots, screen-filling military jets, a train of interlinked tanks, and towering biomechanical monsters. Then you leap on a hover bike and fight waves of oncoming missiles, followed by more Giger-esque aliens.

As you can see in the screenshots the game is also gorgeous, with painstakingly detailed sprites in the post-apocalyptic style popular with Irem at the time. It's also animated beautifully, with a lot of personality – the main characters flail their arms as they leap around or are hit with heavy ordinance. Watch as their arms twist in multiple directions, laying down waves of 360-degree fire. The bosses too, are amazing. One is a flying mech-suit with a mini-gun at its groin, the pilot of which opens his hatch and physically throws missiles at you.

Everything about *GunForce 2* is mind-blowing, making its obscurity all the more sad. Seldom are arcade games this intensely brilliant.





CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

GUNFORCE: BATTLE FIRE ENGULFED TERROR ISLAND 1991

The original *GunForce* might not be as bad-ass, fast moving or have as rocking a soundtrack as its sequel, but at least it was ported to the SNES and is easier to get hold of.



» Players can climb over, grab on to and hang from just about any surface, which is a little bit reminiscent of *Contra III*.

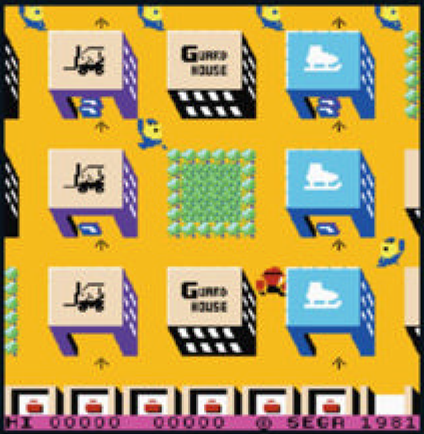
» Vehicles include various different walking robots, anti-aircraft vehicles, a jeep, tanks, various aircraft, and our favourite: a wheelie-popping motorbike.

» Most bosses are enormous biomechanical monstrosities, with detailed sprite animations in the usual *Irem* style. Explosions also look quite excellent.

» *Metal Slug* featured bearded old men to rescue, but in *GunForce 2* they're all babes in skimpy red dresses. Even Player 2 is a babe!

005

■ **Developer:** Sega ■ **Year:** 1981 ■ **Genre:** Stealth



» [Arcade] *005* is an early Sega release that's filled with plenty of interesting gameplay mechanics.

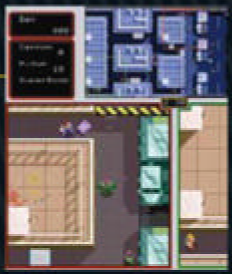
■ **Released the same year as the late Silas Warner's *Castle Wolfenstein*, this cheeky *James Bond*-inspired arcade game from Sega stands as one of the earliest known stealth games.** There are only four types of screen to play through, and only the warehouse and overworld screens feature stealth, but it is still unmistakably a stealth genre forerunner.

Controlling Special Agent 005, you're tasked with stealing top secret briefcases, entering a building to avoid the pursuing authorities and then – assuming you're not detected and killed – getting out the other side to be picked up by helicopter.

Briefcases are automatically acquired on the overworld screen, whereupon you can choose which building to run into – either a warehouse, where guards track you with flashlights, or an ice-rink, where you need to give them the slip. Complete one of each and you enter the final stage, involving a tense helicopter shoot out surrounded by… coloured balloons? As mesmerising as it is strange, they really don't make arcade games like this any more.

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

CRACK DOWN 1989



Also by Sega, also featuring stealth, and with a similar top-down perspective and 'secret mission' premise, *Crack Down* is a more action-packed alternative to *005*. It was ported to several 8 and 16-bit home computers, plus Sega's Mega Drive.

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

GALAXY FORCE II
1988



Although *Galaxy Force II* focuses on combat rather than balloon popping, it had an equally impressive bespoke cabinet (which rotated) and featured exotic stages to fly through. It was ported to numerous home computers and consoles.

PROP CYCLE

■ **Developer:** Namco ■ **Year:** 1996 ■ **Genre:** Flight sim

■ **How many of you were fortunate enough to come across this bizarre, cycling-themed flight sim from Namco?** You couldn't miss it in arcades, with its gluttonous consumption of coins and bespoke cabinet featuring a bright yellow bicycle. The idea behind the contraption was that you pedalled to give your in-game character a boost of power – quite a tiring experience if you didn't pace yourself.

There are two modes: 'Point Attack', and the more difficult 'Story Mode', in which you play through all three of the main stages before unlocking a secret fourth stage. The goal in Story Mode is to get points by popping red balloons, a bit like those fly-through-the-rings missions in *Pilotwings 64*.

What sets it apart, besides the exercise bike, is the beautifully colourful post-apocalyptic world, strongly reminiscent of Hayao Miyazaki's films *Nausicaä Of The Valley Of The Wind* and *Castle In The Sky*. Unfortunately it's a bit short, which is probably why it wasn't ported to something like the PlayStation. A shame indeed.



» [Arcade] You'd certainly never forget Namco's game if you saw it in an arcade. Exercise and fun rolled into one.

BEST LEFT IN THE ARCADE

MR. GOEMON

■ **Developer:** Konami ■ **Year:** 1986 ■ **Genre:** Platformer

■ **Before Konami started on its *Ganbare Goemon* series of RPG adventures for consoles, it tested the eponymous Goemon character and Edo period setting on an old arcade title.** While the music is excellent, and the graphics distinguishable as looking like something from famed artist Katsushika Hokusai, the gameplay is disappointing, being a mish-mash of ideas that don't work very well together.

It's basically a linear run from left to right, picking up items to throw at enemies, attacking them with your pipe and sometimes rolling barrels along the ground. Mostly though, you just avoid continuously spawning enemies and their projectiles. Enemies are easily avoided however, and even the bosses can be bypassed entirely, making them a bit redundant. Despite a timer there's very little player urgency, which isn't good in an arcade title.

It's not the worst arcade game ever, but it's for the best that this was left in the arcades, since it meant that Kazuhisa Hashimoto would radically rethink the character and setting for *Ganbare Goemon*, resulting in a long running series of something far more enjoyable.





READERS' CHOICE

TOP 25 MEGA DRIVE GAMES

As Sega's console turns 25 we asked readers what their favourite Mega Drive games were. David Crookes reveals the 16-bit classics that made your top 25



Disney's Aladdin

■ **DEVELOPER:** VIRGIN INTERACTIVE
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1993 ■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

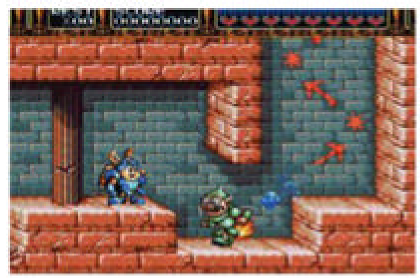
25 **Of all of** the versions, the Mega Drive's *Aladdin* was indisputably the best. Surprisingly put together by legendary developer David Perry in just 99 days, it may have been a platform game – the staple genre of the majority of film tie-ins from the Eighties and early Nineties – but the cartoon graphics, silky smooth animation and diverse nature of the 11 levels was inspired by *Sonic*. It therefore had a frenetic pace and numerous collectables with flowing action that remains great fun.

Jungle Strike

■ **DEVELOPER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1993 ■ **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

24 **A chopper title** that was so good it kept a popular series going for three more games, *Jungle Strike*'s strategical elements and full-on airborne blasting ensures its worthy place in our readers' top 25. The wealth of missions meant that gamers played for lengthy periods of time and, while let down by the sound every now and then, there remained a feeling of being immersed in a strong battle against an intelligent enemy. Well-ported, its natural home was within this original Mega Drive version where, aggressive war-mongering aside, design and control reigned supreme.





Rocket Knight Adventures

■ **DEVELOPER:** KONAMI
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1993 ■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

23 **Seamless blending of** levels and the feeling that this first Konami game for the Mega Drive threw every graphical trick it could into a big pot, *Rocket Knight Adventures* was impressive. This was a game that oozed innovation (save for the boss battles) and higher difficulty levels lent it a challenge no gamer would want to live without experiencing.



Shining Force

DEVELOPER: CLIMAX ENTERTAINMENT

YEAR RELEASED: 1992 **GENRE:** RPG

22 **A shining example** of a fine fantasy RPG, this turn-based tactical exploration of the Kingdom of Guardiana had the ability to see enemies in advance, giving players ample time to work out the correct and most intriguing strategy to employ in order to bloodthirstily slay them in combat. With elements of steampunk and a well-devised plot that employed humour and involved a great range of characters, *Shining Force*'s grid-based action and slick presentation made it an instant classic and it was recognised as such by many who played it back in 1992. Sure, there are some bizarre moments in the English translation – Lug, Luke, gah, it's so confusing – but that didn't stop it from getting into *Mega*'s Top 33 of all time and neither, it seems, did it bar it from entering our Top 25. Play it again today on iOS (like many other Sega classics) for pure retro gaming on the go.

ToeJam & Earl

DEVELOPER: JOHNSON VOORSANGER PRODUCTIONS

YEAR: 1991 **GENRE:** ACTION/ADVENTURE

21 **The cover screamed** 'jammin' and it seems this totally cool and chilled-out game struck a chord with readers. Everyone likes a laugh, and ToeJam & Earl were a comedy duo to rival some of the greatest. The slow build-up at the start of this top-down action game soon gave way to plentiful giggles, and the developers no doubt had a ball when packing in their belly dancers, nerds and bogeymen among other assorted weird happenings, most of which parodied urban culture in the Eighties. *ToeJam & Earl* came into its own, in particular, when the two-player mode kicked in to allow gamers to share the experience with a buddy. While it wasn't a hard game to beat, the tone of the game drove players forward (albeit sometimes at a sedentary pace) and there was a sense of never quite knowing what was to come.



Desert Strike

DEVELOPER: ELECTRONIC ARTS

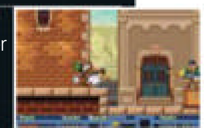
YEAR RELEASED: 1992 **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

20 **The subject matter** of *Desert Strike* is as relevant today as it was back then, with the affairs of the Middle East still firmly on the agenda. As befitting such a scenario, it was rather political, referencing the inability of the UN to take direct action against a war-mongering dictator and his army. However, it was also a sophisticated shoot-'em-up that was a world away from the more conventional examples of the genre, proving so popular, it was made for a host of other machines. Gulf War inspiration aside, *Desert Strike* had a rather fresh approach to war, although lead designer Mike Posehn had never made a game before he tackled this project. He ensured the game had everything you needed for a rich experience, be it maps, cut-scenes to explain the action or mission details to work out what to do next. The five main missions were supplemented with ten sub-assignments, lending depth and variety, as well as ensuring that gamers would be able to feast their eyes on the wonderful graphics and let their ears take in the Ron Hubbard sounds of war for a number of hours.

QuackShot Starring Donald Duck

DEVELOPER: SEGA AM7

YEAR: 1991 **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

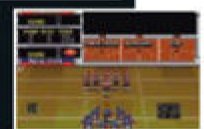


19 **Perhaps readers were** dewy-eyed over Dewey (and Huey and Louie). *QuackShot* proved that older gamers could enjoy some Disney action, but the beautiful graphics were marred by slow gameplay. This was perhaps better for newbies.

John Madden Football '92

DEVELOPER: ELECTRONIC ARTS

YEAR: 1991 **GENRE:** SPORTS



18 **The game may** have lacked NFL and NFLPA licences, but EA's second title to feature the legendary American football commentator started the annual tweak-the-gameplay trend that kicked off a long-running franchise. And boy, it was a joy to watch that crowd celebrate.

Thunder Force III

DEVELOPER: TECHNOSOFT

YEAR: 1990 **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

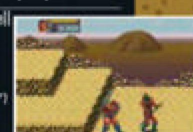


17 **Like *R-Type*, this** horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up excelled throughout, searing eyeballs with sharp sprites, polished parallax scrolling and bad-ass backgrounds that made the rat-a-tat waves of battling baddies and their barrage of bullets a pleasure. Great bosses too.

Golden Axe

DEVELOPER: SEGA AM7

YEAR: 1989 **GENRE:** SCROLLING FIGHTER

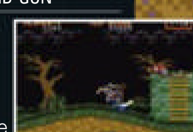


16 **One of the most** well known Mega Drive games in existence, even for those that didn't play it. *Golden Axe*'s fun two-player mode made this scrolling fighter shine, as players head butted, kicked and sliced their way to victory with more than a nod or two to the *Conan* films.

Ghouls 'n Ghosts

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM/SEGA

YEAR: 1989 **GENRE:** RUN-AND-GUN



15 **Straight from the** arcades to home machines, this run-and-gun classic (converted by Sega) is just as frustrating as the arcade original. It remains a fantastic port however and had owners grinning at their SNES-owning friends. Until *Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts* came along…



Dynamite Headdy

■ **DEVELOPER:** TREASURE
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1994 ■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

14 Developed by Treasure, the bright, colourful visuals of *Dynamite Headdy* will have stuck in the heads of all the gamers who tried this genre-busting platformer back in 1994. An all-so-knowing and relevant tale of a puppet called Headdy in pursuit of a girl's attention, it could easily have gone down the path of *Mario* (which, admittedly is a great route for games to take). After all, Headdy discovers that his girl and his friends have been kidnapped. What to do? Go and rescue them.

But where *Dynamite Headdy* succeeded was in turning perception upside down, literally at times. It also relied on getting the right head on, whether it be a strength-increasing offensive noggin or one that would let him snooze. It meant that, even for platform fans, it was a new experience, helped along by lots of useful characters.





Flashback

■ **DEVELOPER:** DELPHINE SOFTWARE INTERNATIONAL
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1992 ■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

13 It is the best selling French game of all time, according to Guinness World Records, and US Gold brought it to the wider masses. The way the screens slid in rather than scrolled when the player neared the edge, gave it an old-school feel even when it was released in 1992, but the rotoscoping and use of FMV made it feel part of the future. *Flashback* became a massive hit and was marketed as being a CD-ROM game on a cartridge due to its huge scope and size. All of the backdrops were hand drawn, and so the style was very much unlike anything that came before it. This lent it an ambitious edge which could be seen in the manner of play, the realms of role-play coming to the fore in level two and enemies suddenly feeling sharper and more intelligent the deeper you go.

Streets Of Rage

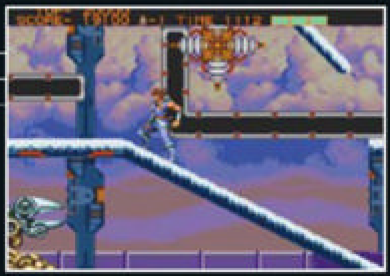
■ **DEVELOPER:** SEGA AM7
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1991 ■ **GENRE:** SCROLLING FIGHTER

12 At the time of release, many regarded *Streets Of Rage* to be the Mega Drive's best fighter. We won't say it was the best ever, for reasons that will undoubtedly become clear later, but it was a two-player combat game of excellence that had scores of enemies battling against you over eight levels. A worthy alternative to Capcom's *Final Fight*, which was exceedingly popular on Nintendo's SNES, it may have been a little slow (particularly if you played as Adam) but there was no denying that the game's combat made it highly satisfying to play. It had a great multiplayer mode as well, giving it the edge over the SNES ports of Capcom's popular fighter. Add in some truly astonishing trance-style music, courtesy of Yuzo Koshiro and Motohiro Kawashima, and it becomes easy to see why Sega's scrolling fighter remains so popular.



Strider

■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM/SEGA
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1990 ■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER



11 This is quite simply one of the finest arcade ports of its time on Sega's machine and it still manages to impress today. Sega handled the ambitious port itself, and the end result is a magnificent early release for the Mega Drive that proved just how powerful the 16-bit console was. *Strider* remains beautifully animated as he fights his way through the game's huge levels and, while certain sections are prone to some rather irritating sprite flicker, it's still amazing to see just how polished Sega's port actually is. Full of inventive level design - including the best second level ever - and featuring a bewildering array of crazy bosses to battle through, *Strider* is Capcom at its most inventive and creative and it remains a sensational platformer. Filled with dazzling set pieces and excellent tunes, *Strider* on the Mega Drive was arguably one of the best ports of the game, with only the Sharp X68000, PC Engine and PlayStation versions bettering it. Darran is still in shock that it didn't make your top ten.







Thunder Force IV

■ **DEVELOPER:** TECHNOSOFT
■ **YEAR:** 1992 ■ **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

10 **Okay, so we** kind of glossed over *Thunder Force III* and that is because, as great as it was, many readers feel this is better. For those reading in America, you may know this as *Lightening Force: Quest For The Darkstar*, a game that rocked to a synth beat and locked to a hair-pulling regional program that meant European Mega Drive and Genesis owners couldn't play the Japanese version.

Thunder Force IV wasn't a gigantic leap from *Thunder Force III*. It was a bit of gameplay tinkering here, a little polish of the graphics there, and yet the result is considered by many to be the best of the series. It may still be a shoot-'em-up that scrolls to the side, but you could go up further than the boundaries of the 14-inch telly that you had in your bedroom and it felt as if you had loads more freedom.

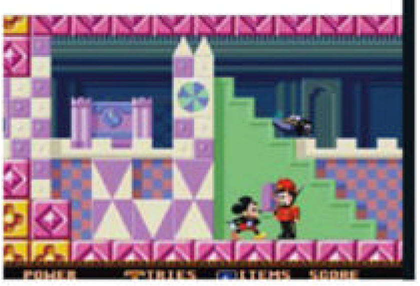
Looking as if the graphic artists had stayed up day and night for months on end due to the incredible detail of the backdrops and sprites, it is fair to say that the programmers, on the other hand, may have had some sleep. There wasn't so much innovative thinking going on, especially in terms of speed where slow-down was an issue at times but not enough to make you wince.

However, if something was achieved, then it was a sheer show of power. If nothing else, the game, while starting to feel as if it was just offering standard shoot-'em-up fare, showed the true power of the Mega Drive and you sensed that the achievement could not have been possible on other consoles. With the history of the series behind it, *Thunder Force IV* could afford to push on incrementally rather than make a wholesale change and, today, if you were going to go back and play one of the series' games, you should certainly make a bee-line for this.

Castle Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse

■ **DEVELOPER:** SEGA AM7
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1990 ■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

9 **Although you may** think home consoles were awash with *Mickey Mouse* games, this was actually only the second outing for Disney's anthropomorphic rodent. It helped to cement the Mega Drive's reputation as a must-have machine, such was the addictive nature and jaw-dropping graphics that combined to make the game so loved. Beautiful parallax scrolling and a range of animated faces brought the world and Mickey to life. It wasn't an incredibly hard game and the obstacles and traps that lay before Mickey were by no means insurmountable. But who could fail to fall for a charming butt-stomp that dispatches Mickey's enemies? Not us.





The Revenge Of Shinobi

■ **DEVELOPER:** SEGA AM7
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1989 ■ **GENRE:** RUN-AND-GUN

8 **Revenge is such** an ugly word, isn't it? But, without wishing to sound corny, it made for a very sweet game. The sequel to *Shinobi*'s 1987 debut turned Joe Musashi into a household name and, while he pounded the streets of his eight districts in a bid to confront Neo Zeed, he got to biff Batman and spring a surprise on Spider-Man among an assortment of other well-known hero-baddies. Such blasé use of said icons (explained away by the doings of a shape shifter) got Sega into some bother and it had to make some later revisions. But that only provides for what is a good yarn – not that a well-animated, sonically beautiful and addictive game would need such assistance.

Road Rash II

■ **DEVELOPER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1993 ■ **GENRE:** RACING

7 ***Road Rash II*** is one of only two racing games in the top 25, showing that either the Mega Drive wasn't really blessed with a vast selection of such titles, or that our readers couldn't give two hoots about many of them. Great for one or two players, and having three bike classes in Ultra Light, Nitro Class and Super Bike, *Road Rash II* had a number of options that included a split-screen game, pure head-to-head and some smacks to opposing riders' faces. The learning curve was spot on too, with the difficulty increased after each section. The good news was that you could just keep going until you fell asleep (not while racing, we hope) and, once you had secured your racing passwords, you could start from where you finished off.





6 Micro Machines Turbo Tournament '96

■ **DEVELOPER:** SUPERSONIC SOFTWARE
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1995 ■ **GENRE:** RACING

While basically *Micro Machines 2,* this version of the top-down tiny racing game was exclusive to the Sega Mega Drive. The game itself was already an enhancement of its predecessor, with different handling techniques that depended on the vehicles and new cars. *Turbo Tournament '96* added the track construction kit from the PC version of *MM2*, as well as updated tracks, meaning that Mega Drive owners could feel special and play the best version of the sequel too. This game wasn't produced by Codemasters but instead was contracted out to Supersonic, a company that was able to play to its strengths and produce a game that was the envy of other console owners at the time.

Sonic The Hedgehog 3

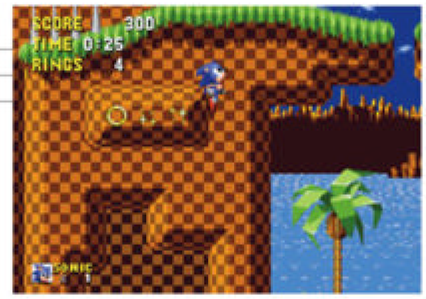
■ **DEVELOPER:** SONIC TEAM
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1994 ■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER



5 **Sonic's first entry** in our list and it's predictably high. Sonic's last main Mega Drive game was an impressive refinement of the series, featuring everything that had made the hedgehog so popular but on a far larger scale. Notable for introducing Knuckles to the series, *Sonic 3* also used the lock-in technology that had been created by Sonic Team and Sega Technical Institute for *Sonic & Knuckles*. It's a fantastic platformer with excellent visuals, super slick animation and a superb soundtrack – but according to you, it's not Sonic's best Mega Drive outing.

Sonic The Hedgehog

■ **DEVELOPER:** SONIC TEAM
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1991 ■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER



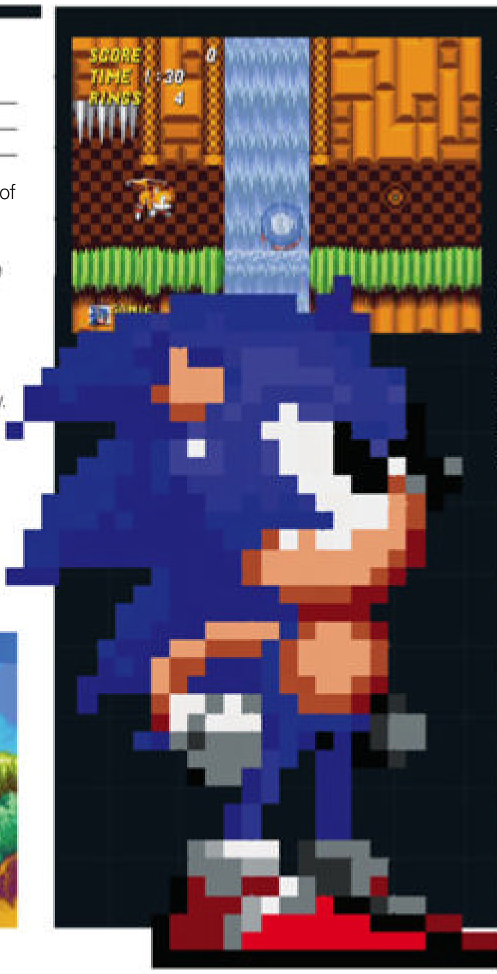
4 **A true blue** classic. *Sonic The Hedgehog* was eventually bundled with the Mega Drive in a move by Sega's Tom Kalinske to draw interest away from the evil-sounding *Altered Beast* that was currently packaged with the console. This shrewd move allowed Sega's new mascot to go toe-to-toe with Mario – not that the fat plumber would ever manage to keep up with Sonic's blistering speed. Bold, sleek and cool, *Sonic The Hedgehog* was as much a statement about Sega's attitude as it was a superb platformer, and it's little wonder that it went on to become one of the system's best games.

Gunstar Heroes

■ **DEVELOPER:** TREASURE
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1993 ■ **GENRE:** RUN-AND-GUN

3 **Treasure's Mega Drive** debut is one of the greatest calling cards of the 16-bit generation. Packed with imagination, and pulling off graphical tricks that the machine was supposedly incapable of, *Gunstar Heroes* was a revelation upon release and remains a stunning achievement. Like many Treasure games it has superlative visuals, but also understands the importance of great gameplay. *Gunstar Heroes* has tight controls, a clever weapon system (you can combine weapons) and well-structured levels that culminate in fantastic, imaginative boss fights. Treasure would go on to release five more games for Sega's console, but its astounding debut is clearly your favourite.



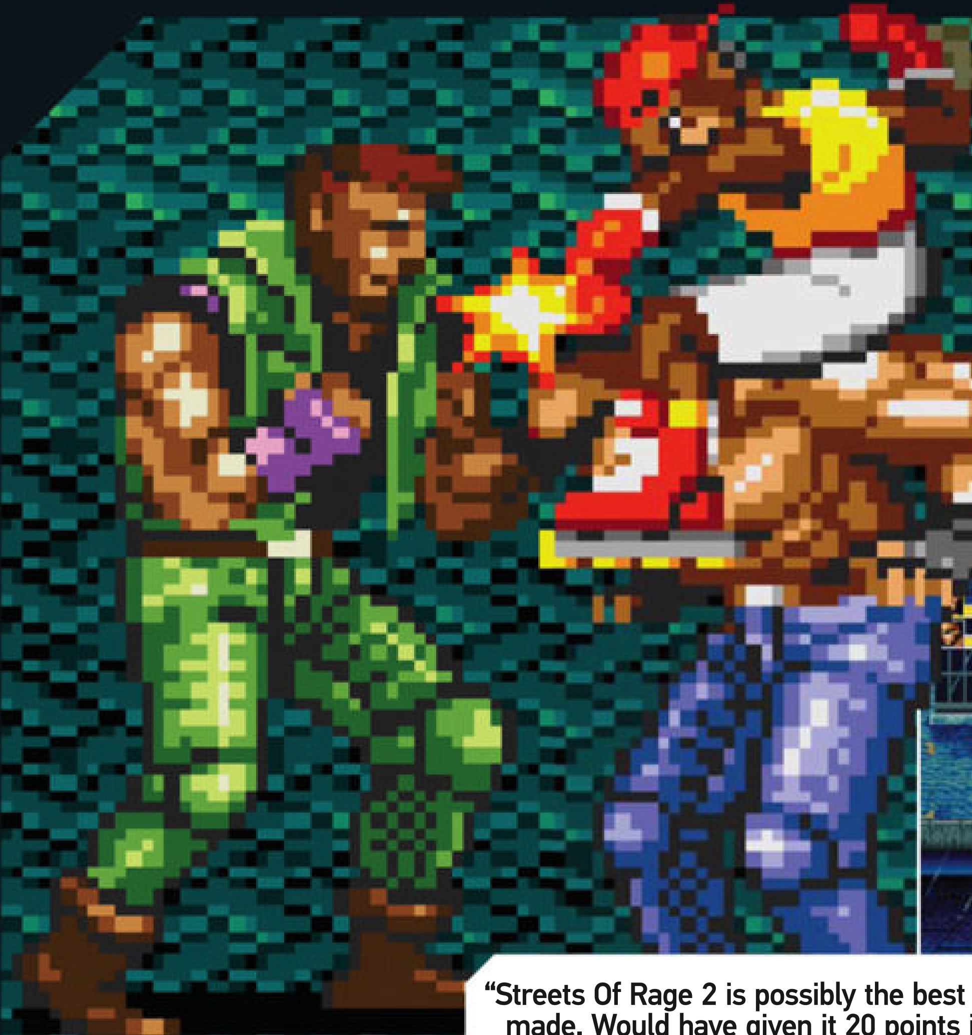


Sonic The Hedgehog 2

■ **DEVELOPER:** SONIC TEAM
■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1992 ■ **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

2 **What? More Sonic?** Oh yes – but then Sega's blue mascot was a major icon, and never more so than on the Mega Drive. *Sonic 2* was able to pick up on the momentum of the first game that pretty much every Mega Drive owner would have played to death, but Sega knew it had to be special. It was released on 24 November 1992 on an occasion that was dubbed 'Sonic 2uesday'. It became the Mega Drive's best-selling title and players once again collected rings and got Sonic to run as fast as they could, but in came spin dashing and Sonic's partner Tails, whom a second player could control. A genius solution to Sonic potentially dashing away was to have Tails make his way back to him automatically. *Sonic 2* is, and there is no doubt here, the hedgehog's finest gaming moment.









> "Streets Of Rage 2 is possibly the best game ever made. Would have given it 20 points if I could"
>
> The Laird

Streets Of Rage 2

■ **DEVELOPER:** SEGA AM7 ■ **YEAR RELEASED:** 1992 ■ **GENRE:** SCROLLING FIGHTER

1 **We were surprised** that *Streets Of Rage 2* took the top spot as we genuinely thought that it would be a *Sonic* game sitting at the top of your list. Sega's superb sequel strode into the lead very quickly though, and soon began to amass huge support making it undoubtedly your number one Mega Drive game of all time.

Everything about Sega's sequel was bigger, bolder, and well… better. The most noticeable difference was the truly spectacular looking sprites that looked far beefier than the weedy looking efforts shown in the original game. The gameplay had also been greatly refined, with special moves being granted to each character, including an attack from Axel Stone that looked a lot like Ryu's Dragon Punch. As with Capcom's *Final Fight*, pulling off a special move was a great way of defeating multiple enemies at once and also granted you a small amount of invulnerability (at the expense of some of your precious health).

Such strategic use of these moves was vital in order to achieve victory in a game that was hard going no matter how good you became or what difficulty level you decided to play on. However, it was clear that Sega didn't go down the path of merely bolting on a few extras. It re-jigged the entire game and was bigger and better in so many respects, not least in the aforementioned chunkier characters that moved with far greater animation than before.

New characters were also introduced, namely Max Thunder, a huge lumbering tank, and Eddie 'Skate' Hunter, a fast-paced skater who, despite his young age, had no problem leaping onto the backs of strangers and punching their faces in. Blaze Fielding and Axel Stone also returned, ensuring that players would have no problem finding a fighter that would suit their playing style.

The co-operative fighting of the original once again came to the fore, allowing players to team up to pull off silly, showy moves that would decimate enemies and allow you to combat *Streets Of Rage 2*'s occasionally tough difficulty spikes. Bosses were tougher as well, and a lot more inventive, ensuring that you'd keep plugging away until you had scrapped your way through all eight stages.

Sega had even improved the excellent soundtrack, once again securing Yuzo Koshiro and Motohiro Kawashima to create some stirring tunes to accompany all the on-screen fisticuffs. It remains one of the best Mega Drive soundtracks of all time, with the musicians putting in just as much effort as the programmers to ensure that Sega's sequel was better in every possible way. Everything about Sega's ambitious sequel was massively enhanced, culminating in the best scrolling fighter for any 16-bit system. Hell, for many it remains the best scrolling fighter of all time.

Five reasons why it's great

- Each character has their own unique moves and abilities
- There are loads of weapons to pick up and use, from knives to metal bars
- It has one of the best techno soundtracks heard in any videogame we've played
- Graphically superb, the characters are arcade-chunky and the backdrops ooze quality
- Action moves left to right and up and down giving a feeling of exploration as you biff opponents

Defender of the Crown

It set the bar very high for graphics and began the long marriage between games and movies. Syd Bolton looks both backwards and forwards at Cinemaware's first epic release



Few games can claim to be system sellers the way that *Defender Of The Crown* was when it was released back in 1986. Packing a massive 1.5 megabytes of graphics onto two disks (which were cleverly labelled 'Reels'), Cinemaware's glorious looking game helped sell Amigas in the shops as customers were wowed by its impressively smooth animation and cinematic music. The game quickly became a big success for Cinemaware, leading to other classics ranging from *The King Of Chicago* to *Rocket Ranger* and *It Came From The Desert*. Despite its critical and commercial acclaim, the development phase of *Defender Of The Crown* was not quite as smooth or harmonious as you'd think.



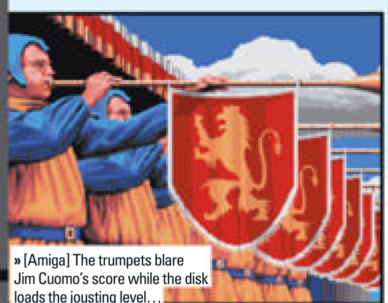
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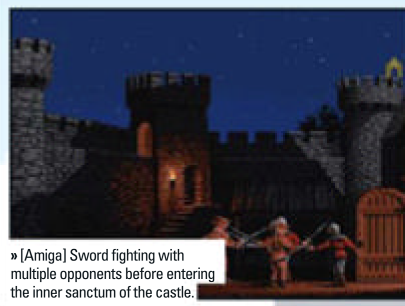
- » **PUBLISHER:** MINDSCAPE
- » **DEVELOPER:** MASTER DESIGNER SOFTWARE (AKA CINEMAWARE)
- » **RELEASED:** 1986
- » **PLATFORM:** DOS, NES, APPLE IIGS, ATARI ST, APPLE MACINTOSH, ZX SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD CPC, COMMODORE 64, COMMODORE AMIGA, COMMODORE CDTV, CD-I, WINDOWS, GAME BOY ADVANCE, IOS
- » **GENRE:** ACTION/ STRATEGY

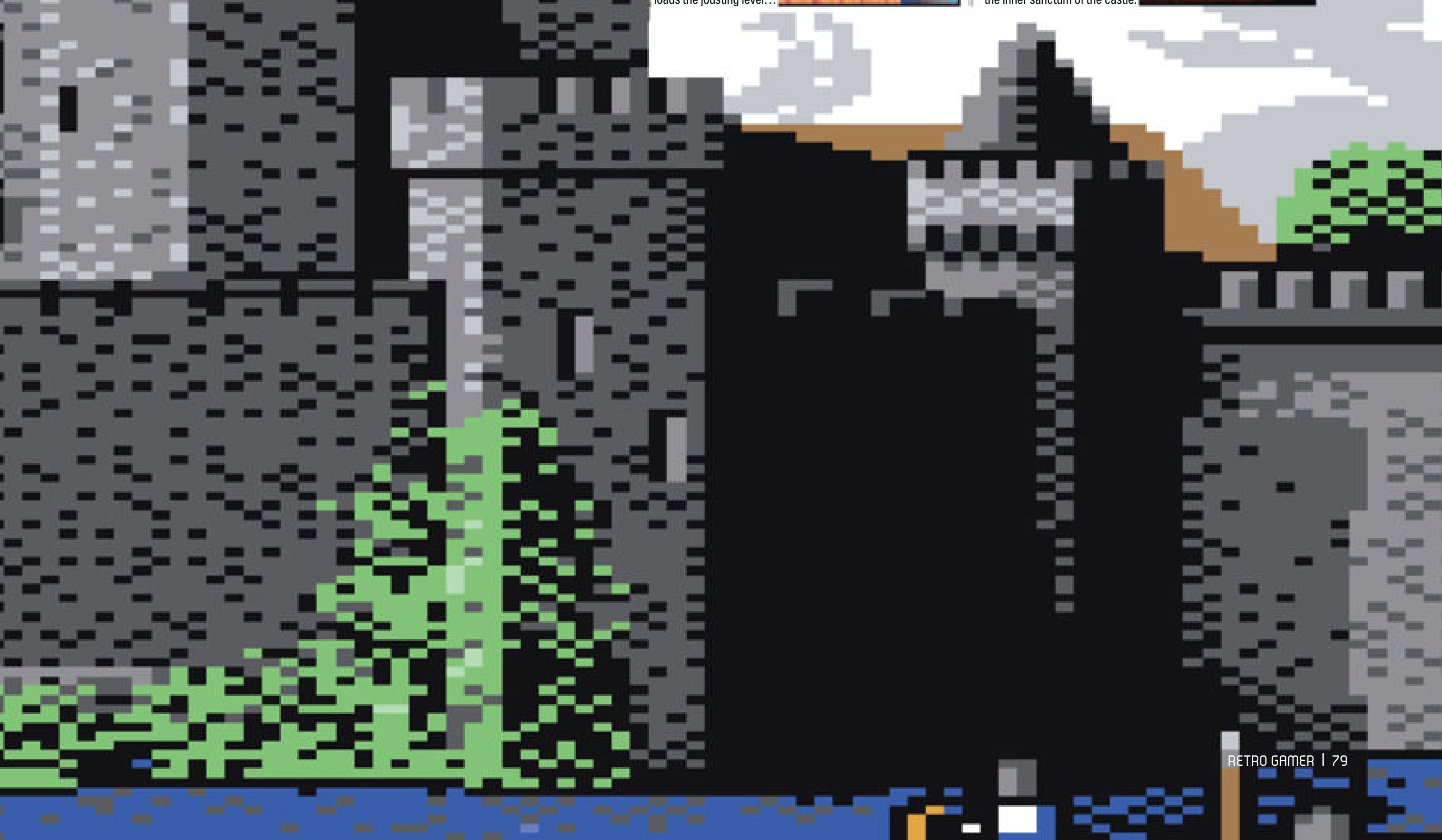
Cinemaware co-founder Bob Jacob was growing tired of how games were mostly designed and programmed by the same person, and decided that Cinemaware should try to do something a little different to its peers. As a result, he began to look to movies as a source of inspiration. He had an idea for a game that used the concepts of the popular board game *Risk,* but was centred around "knights and jousting and damsels in distress". When he shared his broad vision with game designer Kellyn Beeck (sometimes credited as Beck) in February of 1986, their ideas seemed to meld together quite well and a vision for Jacob's original idea came together quickly. Knowing that medieval Britain was a well of legend to draw from as source material, Beeck based the game loosely around the time period that included chivalrous knights, pretty women, and of course Robin Hood, who pops up during the actual game.

Like traditional films, Beeck created elaborate storyboards for the game, which enforced the cinematic feel that would fuel *Defender Of The Crown* and many later Cinemaware games. "*Defender* is a mix of strategy, action, and even a little RPG. Well, perhaps rpg in lower case letters" says Jacob about Cinemaware's excellent game and the approach the team took with it. *Defender Of The Crown* was the first game in a long series from Cinemaware that changed the presentation and quality of games and truly tried to bring cinema and gaming together. Cinemaware was also notable for taking its time on conversions to different platforms, often starting from scratch with many game assets. The end result was that a Cinemaware game always felt like an experience, a game you had to pick up no matter what.

Beeck, along with producer John Cutter, set out to assemble the right team to create their ambitious first game. Master Designer Software (the name of the company before it was formally changed to Cinemaware) was working with Aegis Development and through it met Jim Sachs. He was already an Amiga developer and had some previous success on the Commodore 64, but was looking forward to the great capabilities of the ▶


» [Amiga] The trumpets blare Jim Cuomo's score while the disk loads the jousting level…


» [Amiga] Sword fighting with multiple opponents before entering the inner sanctum of the castle.



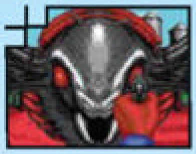


» [Amiga] RPG elements include different levels of leadership, jousting, and swordplay for the characters.

Amiga. He was soon hired as art director and managed a team of six other artists. Jim Cuomo was in Los Angeles on a software sales trip. He met with the team and was hired to do the music. Two additional people were hired to do the programming.

The graphics for the game progressed quickly, but there was a lot of it to do and, at the time, the tools Sachs had access to were rather limited. Sachs was drawing screens one pixel at a time using Graphicraft on the Amiga, as Deluxe Paint had not been released when work on *Defender Of The Crown* started. Sachs switched over to what was to become the industry standard, but was still learning the intricacies of the program. He was enamoured with its new file format, however. "What an incredible gift the ILBM graphics standard was to artists!" He tells us. "If you set one or more colour ranges, the computer would automatically cycle through them whenever the screen was displayed. From glittering metal to water effects – I was delighted to have this 'free' animation available. Hardly a day went by when I didn't find a new use for it. Just a touch of water ripple or flickering flame gave the Amiga scenes a life that had to be lacking in machines without colour cycling."

Musician Jim Cuomo did not see the graphics for the game until the end, but was told to "listen to the music from the classic film *The Adventures Of Robin Hood*." He did, but decided to go his own way by using a piano to compose the final pieces, which were then orchestrated on the Amiga by Bill Williams. To this day, Cuomo is pleased and surprised by the many nods the music from *Defender* has received by other artists doing their own remixes and versions. "The funniest by far is by Danish band Press Play On Tape in which the main theme was sung acapella with amusing lyrics," he reveals. Cuomo currently lives in Australia and performs a one-man show around the world that includes excerpts from *Defender.*



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

SDI
SYSTEM: AMIGA, ATARI ST, COMMODORE 64, ZX SPECTRUM, DOS, MACINTOSH
YEAR: 1986

IT CAME FROM THE DESERT (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: AMIGA, ATARI ST, MEGA DRIVE, TURBO GRAFX 16, DOS
YEAR: 1989

WINGS
SYSTEM: AMIGA, GAME BOY ADVANCE
YEAR: 1990



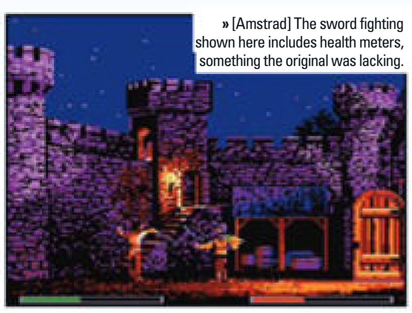
PORTING DOTC TO INTELLIVISION

It is difficult to fathom that a game created on the most powerful computer available in 1985 has been ported down to what was, arguably, the most powerful videogame console available in 1980. With advances in Intellivision development in both tools and hardware, French Intellivision developer Arnauld Chevallier set out on this ambitious project, completing about 60 per cent of the game before moving on to other ventures. The team at the Personal Computer Museum have picked up the task of finishing off the development side of the project, and the completed game will be available this year from Elektronite/Classic Game Publishers. Videos of the game as it has developed so far are available on YouTube, showing just how well the game has translated to the more limited Intellivision. All screens will be present and, in addition, the music and the gameplay is taken from the more advanced Commodore 64 and Atari ST versions – so, in some ways, it could potentially be better than the Amiga version. A new graphics tool has been developed to help with converting higher resolution (and higher colour palette) images from modern computers down to the restrictive Intellivision palette and size. Developing games for the Intellivision is particularly interesting, as the main processor is the General Instrument CP1600, which was based on the PDP-11, a popular minicomputer.

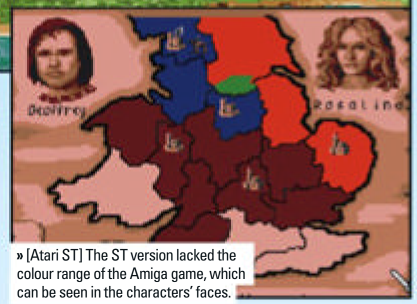
The original programmers on the project had not turned in anything feasible after weeks of working on it, and the entire game was in critical danger. At the time, it was felt that the only two programmers that were available with enough inside knowledge of the machine were RJ Mical, who created the 'Intuition' user interface on the Amiga itself, and Carl Sassenrath, who developed the low level multi-tasking 'Exec' operating system of the machine. In the end, Mical was chosen and brought in to finish the job.

Taking only six weeks, Mical saved the project by bringing life to all the graphics and sound that the rest of the team had put together. He started to develop what was known as the 'Mical Game System', which was intended to be used with other titles. His talent for developing tools of this nature for the games industry would continue to be useful for other game projects that he would work on over the years, such as the Atari Lynx, the 3DO console and, more recently, developer tools for the PlayStation 3 and Vita.

Looking back, it almost seems like Mical had a vision for the future on how game development would be done. A software package called Aegis Animator allowed for non-programmers to create animations in a variety of ways. One was creating all of the 'in between' frames (known as tweening) between two different key frames. This is essentially what Adobe Flash would become many years later, and Mical wrote special code to implement the scripts created in Animator right into the game. Sachs, it would appear, actually looked backwards for help with the art. "For the side views of the running horses in the jousting scene, I used 100-year-old rotoscopes done by Eadweard Muybridge" he reveals. "Memory constraints meant I had to whittle these down to only five positions, but the animation was still pretty effective."



» [Amstrad] The sword fighting shown here includes health meters, something the original was lacking.

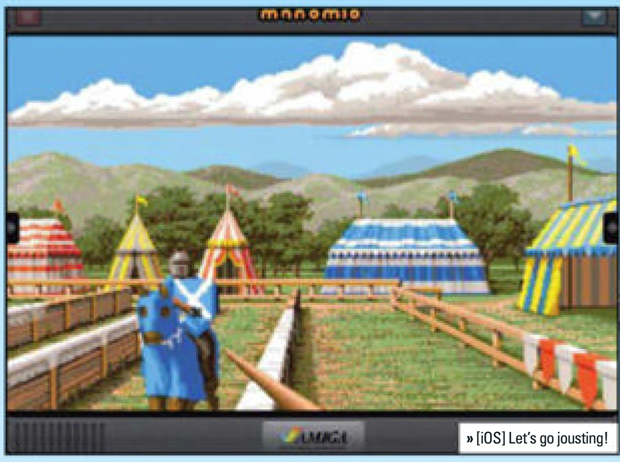


» [Atari ST] The ST version lacked the colour range of the Amiga game, which can be seen in the characters' faces.

Unfortunately, looming deadlines forced things to go a little off the rails near the end of the development process. For financial reasons, the game had to be released for Christmas 1986 in order to start bringing money back into the coffers at Cinemaware. As a result, many compromises had to be made. Almost everyone on the project was working from their own homes (Sachs, for example, was located over 200 kilometres from the head office) and putting in overtime. "Weeks of 20-hour days nearly killed me," explains Sachs about the important crunch time. Major compromises started creeping into the project. "The little stick-figure characters in the swordfight scene were certainly not my first choice," he continues. "We all would have opted for a first-person view, but it just wasn't feasible".

Although the Amiga port is considered to have the best graphics and sound, cutting the project short meant that some of the gameplay elements had to be removed as well. In the Amiga version, fighting against other armies is essentially done behind the scenes. In the Atari ST and Commodore 64 versions you can employ different strategies in the fight such as charging, standing, or taking a more defensive position.

The group that ported the game to the Commodore 64 were grateful for Deluxe Paint, as the graphics were done by literally taking the Amiga version and using every other pixel. "The results were astonishing," according to Jacob. In the end, the game was ported to DOS, Apple II GS, Atari ST, Macintosh, Amstrad, Commodore 64, CDTV,



» [iOS] Let's go jousting!

CD-i and eventually the NES and Game Boy Advance. Most recently, the Amiga version has been ported over to iOS for play on the iPhone and iPad. A version intended for commercial release (but never released) for the ZX Spectrum was also made, and an unofficial version for the Commodore Plus/4 exists as well. A licensed Intellivision version is due by the end of this year.

Various sequels of the game have also been made over time. *Defender Of The Crown: Heroes Live Forever* is a high definition remake of sorts on the Windows platform, while *Robin Hood: Defender Of The Crown* for the PlayStation 2, Xbox and Windows is directly inspired by the original. Just before Commodore went bankrupt, it commissioned Jim Sachs to create *Defender Of The Crown II* for its CD32 system. More of a director's cut than a true sequel, Sachs worked mostly alone on the game. "I changed the gameplay somewhat – the player was now trying to raise money to pay the ransom for King Richard, not trying to gain enough influence to become

> "Defender is a mix of strategy, action, and even a little RPG. Well, perhaps rpg in lower case letters"
>
> BOB JACOB, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

King himself," he explains. "Then, I wrote narration and hired voice actors to record it in five languages. I added some animation and some scenes. I wrote all new music with a fully-orchestrated cinematic opening. I rewrote every line of code in an Amiga-specific language called 'The Director'." With limited CD32 distribution and the disappearance of Commodore, this version is likely the hardest to obtain today.

While Cinemaware's huge project was quite difficult for its creators, it seems to have clearly left a lasting impression on them. "I'm just glad I was in the right place at the right time to be involved with the project" says Sachs. "We've been thinking about *Defender* quite a lot lately," continues Beeck. When asked about the Intellivision version, RJ Mical was quick to offer the following information: "I will do the programming myself!" he joked. But was he joking? It seems like *Defender Of The Crown* still has a huge pull over those who worked on in, and it is clearly still as loved by its developers as the gamers that continue to play it to this day. A rare thing indeed.

MORE 16-BIT MOVIES

Additional cinematic masterpieces from Cinemaware

KING OF CHICAGO (1987)



■ Set in the Thirties, this was likely the first mobster videogame ever made. Initially developed on Macintosh, the team at Cinemaware enhanced the visuals with full colour for the Amiga and other platforms. Your goal is to increase the size of your gang and take over the city, doing so with drive-by shootings, gambling, bombings and even bribing government officials! Released before game ratings systems were in effect, this likely would have been an 18+.

SINBAD AND THE THRONE OF THE FALCON (1987)



■ As Sinbad, you are commissioned to rid the land of the dark prince. Developed on the Amiga first, *Sinbad* took you through various screens including a large map with a huge magnifying glass, an earthquake that has you avoiding falling rocks, a Cyclops creature to defeat and a shipwreck. Its designer, Bill Williams, also designed the first commercially available Amiga game – *Mind Walker.*

THE THREE STOOGES (1987)



■ *The Three Stooges* incorporated elements from many of the comedic trio's best moments. Featuring extensive use of sound samples and digitized frames of film, it even parodied *Defender Of The Crown* in its opening sequence (apart from in the NES port, which features *Ghostbusters*). The aim is to raise money to save an orphanage, and the player works through several screens to do so. The mini-games vary in quality, but the comedy is ever present.

ROCKET RANGER (1988)



■ *Defender Of The Crown* designer Kellyn Beeck brings us another cinematic classic. You have to collect five parts of a rocket ship (and 500 units of lunarium to power it) in order to reach the moon. The game featured a special 'decoder wheel' as part of the copy protection. If you didn't enter the correct number from the wheel, based on your destination, the rocket would crash. The graphics raised the bar, with large sprites and cinematic music by Bob Lindstrom.

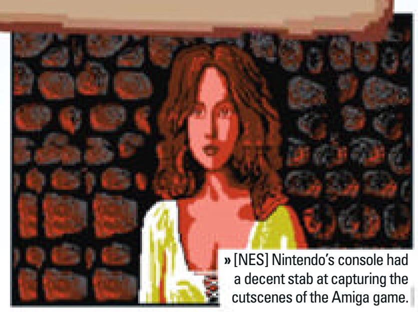
LORDS OF THE RISING SUN (1989)



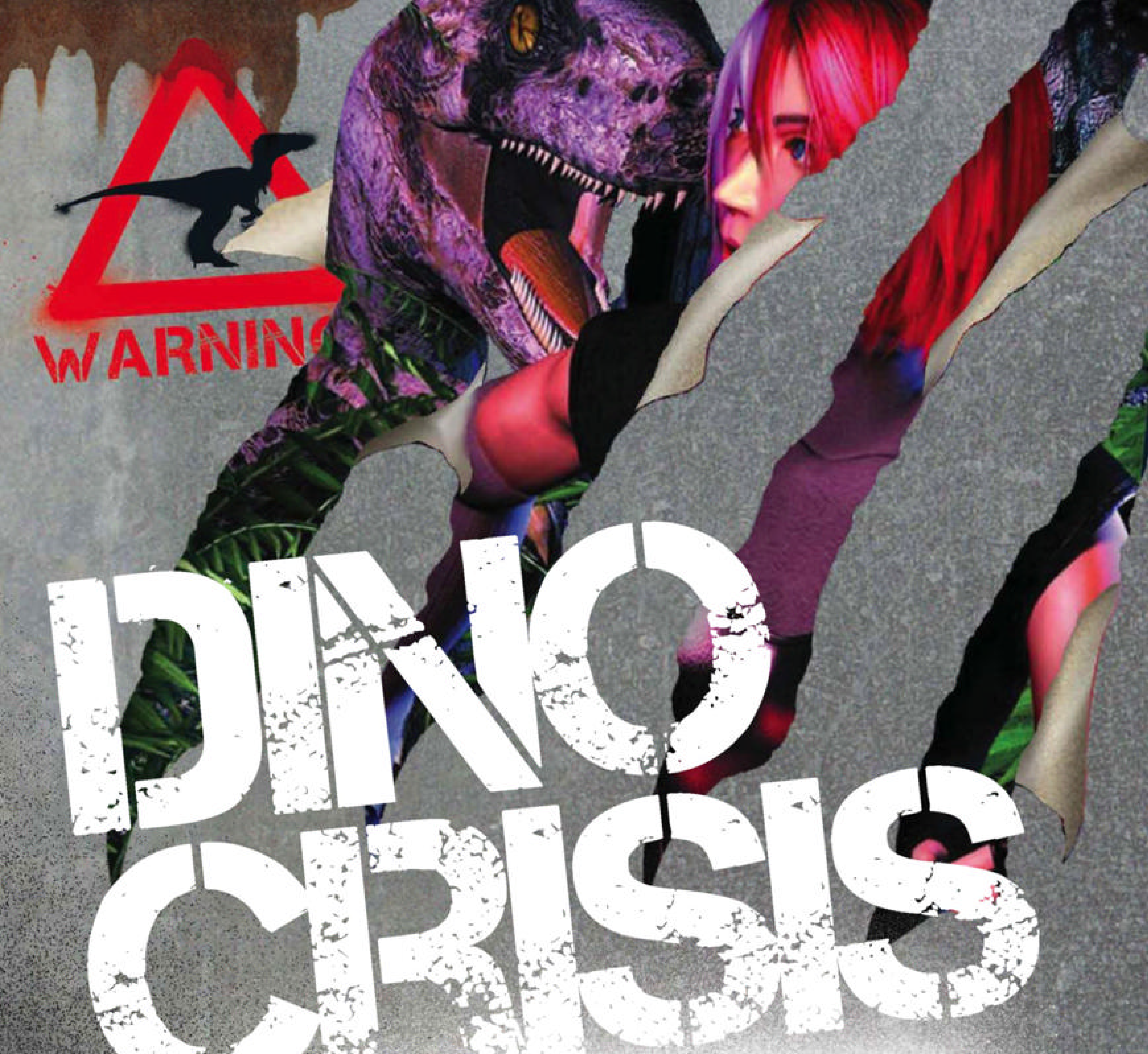
■ Yet another Cinemaware title to feature a map, *Lords Of The Rising Sun* is set in 12th Century Japan and has you setting out to become a Shogun to restore your family honour. A mixture of action and strategy, *Rising Sun* features a very cinematic opening but purveys the least action of all the Cinemaware titles. The CD-i version featured real actors that were digitised into the game. Notably, this title did not get ported to either the Commodore 64 or the Atari ST.



» [C64] These were considered state of the art graphics at one point for Commodore's 8-bit computer.



» [NES] Nintendo's console had a decent stab at capturing the cutscenes of the Amiga game.



DINO CRISIS

TAKE THE RESIDENT EVIL TEMPLATE, REPLACE THE SHAMBLING REANIMATED CORPSES WITH GIANT LIZARDS AND YOU'VE GOT A FRANCHISE FAR MORE INFLUENTIAL THAN THE BASIC PREMISE COULD EVER SUGGEST. LUKE ALBIGÉS LOOKS BACK AT THE CLASSIC TRIASSIC TRILOGY THAT NEVER QUITE MADE PRE-HISTORY

Capcom has a pretty good knack for knowing when it's onto a winning formula. *1942* was its first big hit in the arcades, and after a few years of trying new ideas, it was back to World War II for a number of quick-fire sequels and updates. *Mega Man*? Yeah, that dude was pretty busy for a while there. *Final Fight* did well and before you knew it, it was scrolling fighters as far as the eye could see. And then it was the turn of *Street Fighter*, the second game being a landmark fighter that saw countless iterations while its template was applied to everything from vampires to superheroes.

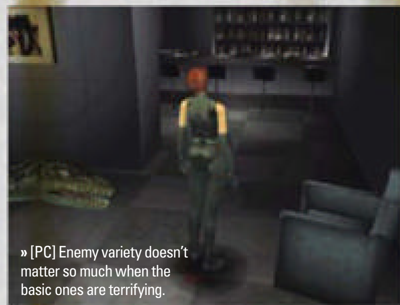
So after Capcom found success hidden away behind an eagle-crested panel within the eerie walls of the Spencer Mansion, it shouldn't have come as any real surprise to anyone that the *Resident Evil* formula was next. As well as an ambitious and excellent zombie-packed sequel, Capcom had greater plans for this format. These first came to light with the announcement of *Dino Crisis*. While it's easy to look back and see the game as just a way of making a quick buck by switching out zombies for dinosaurs, there's a good deal more that *Dino Crisis* and its sequel did that make them worth celebrating.

Think back to that famous moment in *Resident Evil*. You edge down a creepy corridor terrified of what might be around the next corner, but manage to reach the end without incident. But then, on a later visit, your over-confidence in your own safety is shattered as rabid dogs come barreling in through the windows. It was ingenious, both as a way of keeping players on their toes and technologically – the problem with pre-rendered environments such as those in the early *Resident Evil* games is that anything that can or will change tends to stick out like a sore thumb, just as it does in old cartoons. This feat could only be achieved so surprisingly with clever camera placement to ensure the windows that would break couldn't be seen. Terror could only come from off-screen, effectively.


» [PC] The agility of the dinosaurs meant that you'd often find yourself cornered.

"THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN JUST SWAPPING ONE SET OF ENEMIES FOR ANOTHER"

So, despite the fact that PlayStation was starting to show its age, Capcom made the bold move of adopting full-polygon environments. It still took pride in its role as camera operator, so the fixed viewpoints remain, though these could sweep, pan and shift far more naturally than a static backdrop. Some overall polish was lost in the process, sure, but this was for the greater good. There would be nothing that you could take for granted as you did those cleverly out-of-shot windows – *Dino Crisis* could terrify from the word go by allowing bad things to happen anywhere, any time. And with this new (well, extremely old) breed of predators more than happy to take advantage of this technological leg-up, the sense of constant unease was one of the game's most potent tools in separating itself from its spiritual source.

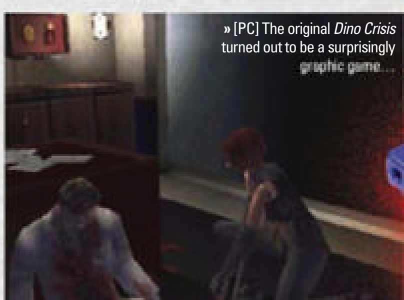

» [PC] Enemy variety doesn't matter so much when the basic ones are terrifying.

Yet there's far more to it than just swapping one set of enemies for another. Most of *Resident Evil*'s enemies are either lethargic or fragile – it isn't until the Hunters come into play that there's ever that much sustained tension, though their clacking footsteps will admittedly haunt us for life. Going up against the scaly newcomers, on the other hand, is like dealing with an army of Hunters, only ones that can work together, navigate the whole environment and come from anywhere. Where *Resident Evil* used slow plays and suspense to define survival horror, *Dino Crisis* instead had a constant sense of being stalked by something and a far more immediate and deadly threat when it did inevitably find you. This was survival *terror*.

Capcom made as much as it possibly could out of the idea that Regina was being hunted. In *Resi*, you can happily push past a group of brain-munchers and make for the door, safe in the knowledge that they haven't got a clue how to work door handles. One of the first main surprises of *Dino Crisis* comes when you try to adopt the same strategy and, after giving you just long enough to assume you're safe, the raptor that was just chasing you comes crashing through the door or leaps over a nearby fence. Outside of the designated safe rooms (where you save and change up your gear), nowhere is actually safe. The panic is layered on further by some clever and cruel design choices – having to bandage severe wounds so you don't leave trails of delicious smelling blood for the predators to follow, for instance, and having dinosaurs capable of knocking your equipped weapon out of your hand.

Surviving this new nightmare with the STARS team's toolset would be frankly impossible, so Capcom also had to rework its control setup. Classic *Resi* tank controls remain at the heart of the system, though the ability to move and shoot at the same time is invaluable against the far speedier enemies, as is the quick 180-degree turn – both features that have since filtered back into the *Resident Evil* series. The same is true of many features of this so-called palette swap, actually. The persistence of the dinosaurs is mirrored in that of the Crimson Head zombies in ▶


» [PC] Don't open that door! No really, the raptor will just follow you anyway.


» [PC] The original *Dino Crisis* turned out to be a surprisingly graphic game…

THE MISSING LINK

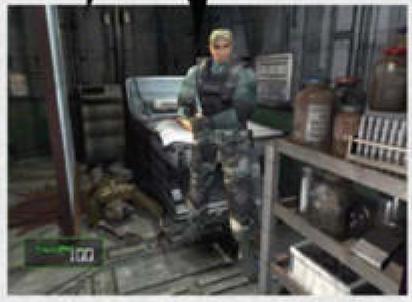
How Dino Crisis nearly made it to Game Boy Color

The *Resident Evil* similarities just keep on coming with this, the revelation of an ambitious yet unreleased Game Boy Color port. Announced in early 2000, a portable version of *Dino Crisis* was in production at M4, the same studio that successfully shipped *Resident Evil: Gaiden* to a lukewarm reception. Whether due to poor performance or reviews for *Gaiden*, or some other factor, the game would never see light of day, although we have it on good authority that fair progress was made on the project. In fact, calling in a few favours, we got hold of ex-M4 chap Tim Hull who told us that there is indeed both a selection of assets of the game and a demo ROM in existence. Sadly, he's off traveling for the foreseeable future and they're buried away in his attic somewhere. If and when he returns from his interesting mission to learn about how different cultures game, we'll try and steal a look at it. Oh, and share it with you guys as well. We're nice like that.





» [PC] Coming face-to-face with T-Rex, the sense of helplessness is overwhelming.



» [PlayStation] Sorry Dylan, but we never liked you as much as Regina. Nothing personal.

▶ the GameCube remake and inventory management and puzzles have become increasingly more complex as the horror series has gone on, as first seen in *Dino Crisis*. The very idea of being stalked lies at the heart of *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis*, a game that was in development alongside this and actually, one to which *Dino Crisis* probably owes a good deal of its success.

Not confident enough that the world had picked up the extent to which *Dino Crisis* was more than just '*Resident Evil* with dinosaurs', Capcom elected to bundle it with a playable demo of the third *Resident Evil*. The practice had worked wonders for Square in the US, with commercial gambles such as *Tobal No 1* and *Brave Fencer Musashi* backed up with demos of the latest *Final Fantasy* games to make them that much more appealing. It's certainly one of the first instances in the UK, though it wasn't long before others were following suit – Konami famously charged sneaking enthusiasts 40 notes for the best bit of *Metal Gear Solid 2* and a free *Zone Of The Enders* tech demo – and these days, the practice is commonplace.

It was the right move though, because the majority of gamers to this day still refer to *Dino Crisis* as '*Resident Evil* with dinosaurs'. While technically true, it's more than a little unfair in light of the gameplay and technology innovations that set it apart. If Capcom wanted to truly prove there was a gap between *Resident Evil* and *Dino Crisis*, it would have to make significant changes to the game's fundamental design if and when it came to making a sequel. Which, since the first game sold well, was always going to happen.

"RESIDENT EVIL 4 OWES A DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO DINO CRISIS 2"

And lo, significant changes were made. The survival motif was all but entirely ditched in favour of something more supportive of the original's often frenetic pace, namely the beating heart of an arcade shooter. Ammo was doled out generously rather than rationed, while the game actively kept score as you tore through wave after wave of the anachronistic monsters. The two feel almost unconnected outside of the name – and of course returning protagonist Regina, alongside some new guy who also really doesn't like dinosaurs – but some elements remained true, such as having to collect a bunch of disks that somehow open locked doors. And even with this new action-heavy slant, the intelligence, speed and overwhelming force of the reptilian opposition still made it a pretty daunting challenge regardless of how high the mountain of ammo you were sat on was.

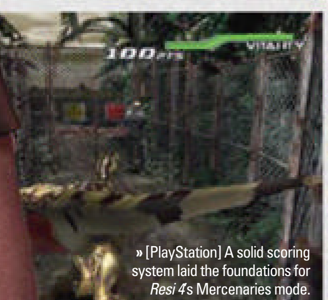




» [PlayStation] Unlike many PSone games, *Dino Crisis 2* holds up brilliantly today.



» [PlayStation] Larger dinos are far less indimidating in the action-heavy sequel.



» [PlayStation] A solid scoring system laid the foundations for *Resi 4*'s Mercenaries mode.

Significant change for the better, then, and the reviews reflected this. *Dino Crisis 2* was almost unanimously well-received by critics but, coming so late in the PlayStation's life (it was released the same day PlayStation 2 launched), it managed to do pretty well at retail but couldn't replicate the original's numbers. With no more big PSone games left to come, Capcom couldn't even spice up the deal with an enticing demo disc this time around.

More important than any of this, though, is what a monumental turning point this was for Capcom. Things *could* change, and still be as loved – if not more so – than their predecessors. *Street Fighter EX* was the closest it had previously come to such a monumental design change between iterations, though that was neither well received nor anything more than misguidedly walking the polygon path in a pair of particularly unsuitable shoes. For a company so founded on iterative sequels and gradual improvements, this revelation must have been a hard thing to take on board, but it set the gears in motion for the changes behind one of the greatest games of all time. Reaction to later *Resident Evil* games such as *Code: Veronica* and *Zero* must have caused no small amount of deja vu at Capcom HQ – fans had started to feel the same way about the core games as they did about the dinosaur-themed 'spin-off' when *Resi* was just two games old. And again, simply changing gear wouldn't have been enough. It was time to change the whole damn engine.

Yes, *Resident Evil 4* owes a debt of gratitude to *Dino Crisis 2*. The pack mentality and terrifying pace of the Ganado was a radical departure for the usual lurching and shuffling of the infected, though it was oddly familiar to those who had had a pack of raptors snapping at their heels. With several failed attempts

MIKAMI OF DARKNESS

The horror legacy of one of Capcom's guiding creative forces

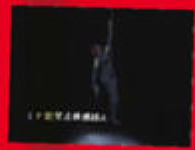






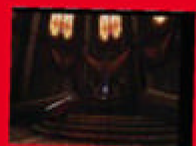
RESIDENT EVIL 2

■ As well as directing the original, Mikami also worked on the amazing second game. It's with good reason that many still champion this as the best game in the series – graphics aside, it still holds up brilliantly.



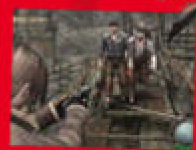
DINO CRISIS

■ Trading zombies for dinosaurs was a great idea in concept, but it would take someone with the horror vision of Mikami to pull it off. It had *Resi*'s cheap scares, sure, but it also had a shed-load of real tension.



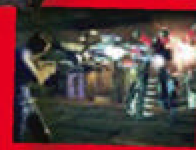
DEVIL MAY CRY

■ Another one that owes much to *Resident Evil*, having been born from a failed 3D prototype. We're glad it went wrong, though – the action-packed gothic horror gave us one of gaming's best loved modern characters.



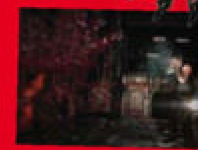
RESIDENT EVIL 4

■ This controversial series reboot changed so much about the standard *Resident Evil* formula but stayed true to its horror roots. Many of Mikami's novel gameplay devices are now par for the third-person shooter course.



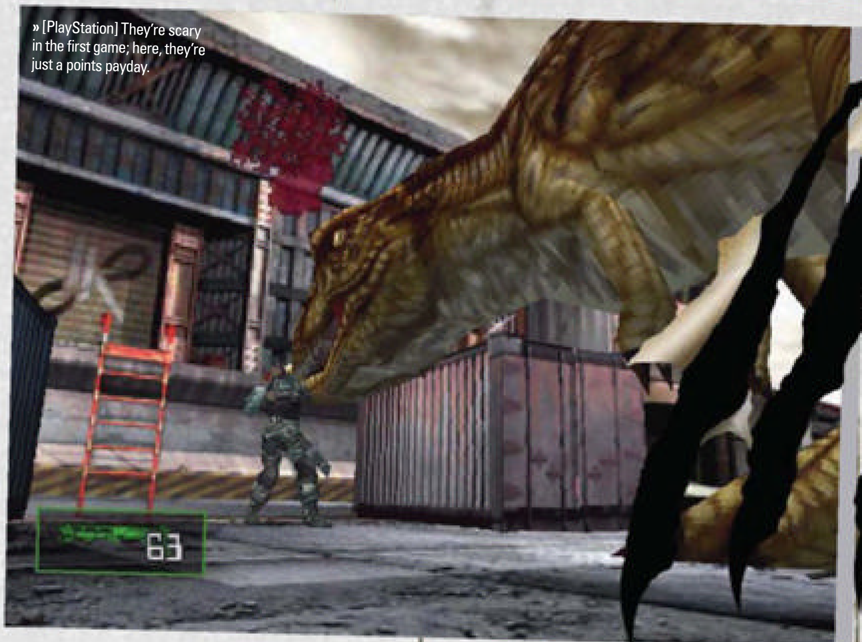
SHADOWS OF THE DAMNED

■ With Mikami's horror sensibilities, Suda 51's creativity and EA's money behind it, this should've been huge. Similar to *Resi 4* gameplay-wise and stylish as hell, it deserved to do better.



THE EVIL WITHIN

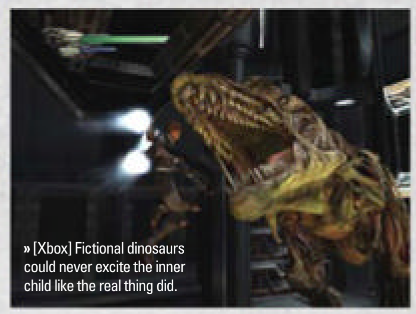
■ Good to see he's still got it. Mikami's new project looks incredible, very much a traditional horror experience but one where next-gen visuals will be able to genuinely affect and scare players. Gulp.



» [PlayStation] They're scary in the first game; here, they're just a points payday.



» [Xbox] *Dino Crisis 3* has what many regard to be the worst videogame camera ever.



» [Xbox] Fictional dinosaurs could never excite the inner child like the real thing did.

at changing things up in the years prior to *Resi 4*'s release – *Street Fighter EX* and *Devil May Cry 2* being the worst offenders – *Dino Crisis 2* remained a shining example of how going back to the drawing board isn't always a bad move. But it's in the unlockable mini-game *The Mercenaries* that we see most of Regina's influence. The score attack mentality, the insane pace and the retention of horror elements in what is ostensibly a pure action game… it all comes straight from *Dino Crisis 2*. Are we saying *Resident Evil 4* wouldn't have happened had it not been for *Dino Crisis*? No. What we're saying is that it would likely have been a very different game.

There's a chapter missing from this story, though. No, not the one about that awful PlayStation 2 lightgun *Dino Crisis* spin-off. That's not even a chapter – it's just a sentence, and it's right there. We're talking about a part we'd rather forget. The part where a game that proved to Capcom that change can be a good thing got a sequel that sent the gaming world a very different message. We're talking, of course, about the embarrassment that is *Dino Crisis 3*.

Was it made while the entire creative and technical teams were on holiday? Was it produced during a brief period where perception-altering drug use was mandatory at Capcom? Was it an elaborate yet costly stunt to troll a Western-developed console? Whatever the reasoning behind it (we're pretty sure it was none of those things), the fact remains that *Dino Crisis 3* is one of the worst games Capcom has ever put its name to. Seemingly done with the constraints of planet Earth after just two games, Capcom saw fit to set the third on a space station. And these weren't your run-of-the-mill dinosaurs like they had in the past either, oh no. These were genetically engineered dinolikes, produced in their thousands so they could be conveniently (and tediously) slain in their thousands. It was even more an action game than *Dino Crisis 2*, with new hero Patrick whizzing around on a jetpack while firing hot laser death at loads of space monsters. Oh God, it was horrible.

It was the camera that proved to be the game's (and perhaps even the franchise's) mass extiction event, though. A hangover from the series' glorious past, the fixed viewpoint system simply couldn't keep up with either ▶

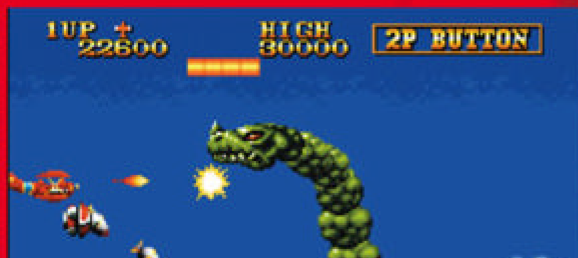
JURASSIC LARKS

More must-play games for those who like their antagonists gigantic and extinct

RENEGADE III: THE FINAL CHAPTER (1989)

■ After huge success with *Target: Renegade*, Imagine Software attempted the same trick again. Unfortunately, its third original *Renegade* game was simply terrible, with stiff controls and dull fighting. Its saving grace is a time-travelling theme allowing you to head back to the prehistoric age and punch dinosaurs in the face.



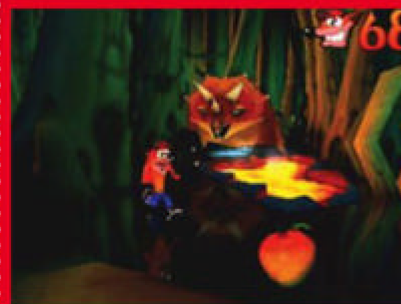


PREHISTORIC ISLE IN 1930 (1989)

■ This classic SNK shooter doesn't just rely on dino cameos – it's totally built around the scaly buggers. Fly your biplane through a remote island in the Bermuda Triangle, laying waste to anything that doesn't belong in the Thirties. Simple enough, but great fun, and it features some of the most memorable boss battles in the genre.

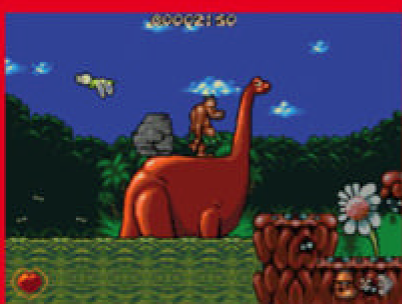
CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED (1998)

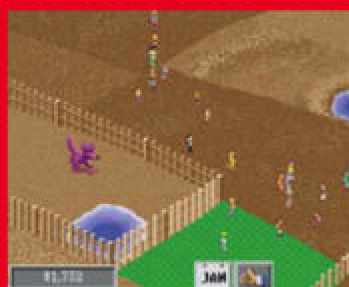
■ The time-hopping threequel features an entire set of levels set in prehistoric times, though that didn't seem to change much in terms of game design. Running away from a Triceratops, dodging and spinning your way through jungles… yeah, it was pretty much classic *Crash*. Only with a Triceratops.



CHUCK ROCK (1991)

■ Core Design must really love dinosaurs. *Tomb Raider* came later, but this is the story of a cartoon caveman with a penchant for lobbing bloody great boulders, which proves helpful for combat and platforming. The final boss was another T-Rex, albeit one wearing boxing gloves and shorts. He was scarily cheap too, as we recall.





DINOPARK TYCOON (1993)

■ What could be better than *Theme Park*? Easy *Theme Park* crossed with all sorts of different dinosaurs. The end result was *DinoPark Tycoon*, a solid strategy title with an education slant that allowed you to fill your zoo with long-extinct lizards.

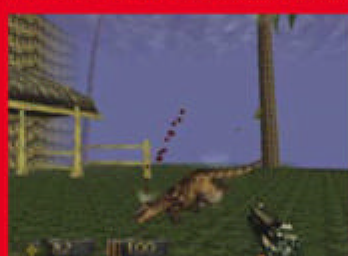
THE REVENGE OF SHINOBI (1990)

■ Why would a ninja fight a dinosaur? We'll answer that question with another question – why wouldn't a ninja fight a dinosaur? What could be more awesome, after all? The New York boss was clearly Godzilla in the copyright nightmare that was the original game (hi, Batman) but was later changed to a skeletal dinosaur.



TUROK: DINOSAUR HUNTER (1997)

■ It's a dirty word these days but, in the Nineties, *Turok* could do no wrong. Both this and its sequel feature loads of dinosaurs to shoot – some modded in amusing, *Dinoriders* fashion – and *Rage Wars* set a benchmark for console deathmatches. What happened to you, Turok? Sob.



WHERE TIME STOOD STILL (1988)

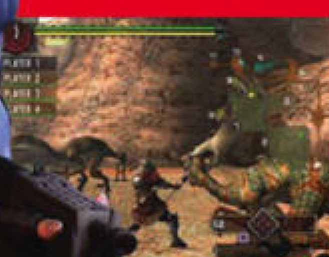
■ How do you improve on *The Great Escape*? Easy, add dinosaurs. This is a superb isometric adventure with clever gameplay mechanics that had you controlling a group of people, stranded in a strange land. Before long, various dinosaurs are out for your blood and you'll need to do everything you can to avoid being eaten.





MONSTER HUNTER (2006)

■ Anyone who likes dinosaurs should savour the chance to go toe-to-toe with Capcom's massive line-up of lizards, dragons and horrible beasties. Not feeling it? How about this – when you're done with them, you can carve them up and turn them into new gear and fancy hats. Yeah, we though that might do the trick…



3D MONSTER MAZE (1981)

■ Ladies and gentlemen, gaming's first dinosaur. Sure, you can outrun the lumbering fool and his gummy grin but don't assume he's harmless – you'll see his teeth if he catches you, that's for sure. Massively pioneering back in the day, it remains a highly atmospheric game of cat-and-mouse.



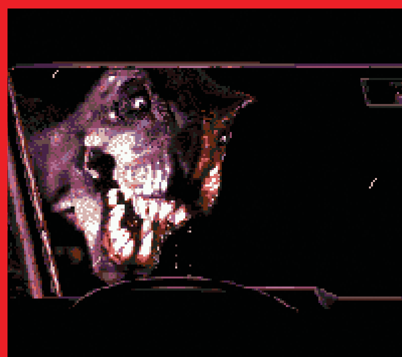


PRIMAL RAGE (1994)

■ With the iconic *Jurassic Park* theme still echoing around in everyone's heads, kids and grownups alike would bicker about which dinosaurs would win in a fight. We're not sure this awful beat-'em-up is an entirely scientific way to find out, but it might just have settled a few arguments all the same. And then caused a bunch more. Oh well.

JURASSIC PARK (1993)

■ Of course. The were loads of licensed games released around the rebirth of dino-cool that was *Jurassic Park*, with this iffy Mega Drive platformer being among the better ones. That tells you pretty much everything you need to know about *Jurassic Park* games. Oh, apart from the fact that *Operation Genesis* was ace.





SUPER BC KID (1994)

■ Or *Bonk*, if you'd rather. Chuck Rock's younger brother looks to be suffering from rather severe head trauma, most likely caused by his continued use of his own skull as an offensive weapon. Still, at least the platform action games were pretty good, even if the character wasn't.

CADILLACS AND DINOSAURS (1993)

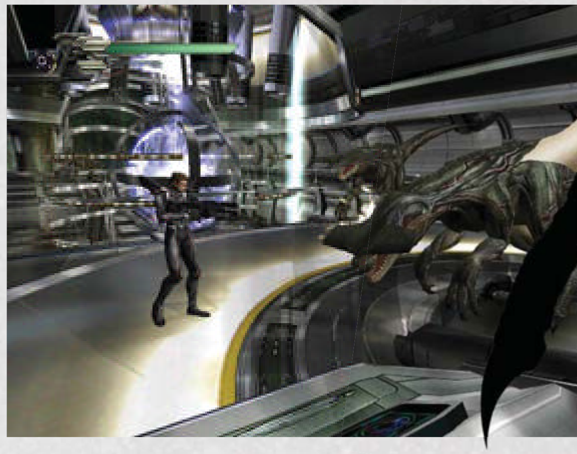
■ Based on comic series *Xenozoic Tales* and tied into a Saturday morning cartoon, *Cadillacs And Dinosaurs* had no right to be as good as it was. Perhaps the most interesting element was the use of dinosaurs as a third faction that could attack both players and enemies, something we don't think we've seen in the genre since.





TRESPASSER (1998)

■ Another *Jurassic Park* title, sure, but this list wouldn't be complete without this inept shooter. After promising the moon on a stick, the only things *Trespasser* delivered were a graphics engine that only about eight PCs on the planet could make look good at that time and accidental hilarity in the way protagonist Anne (voiced by Minnie Driver) interacts with the world. Too bad.

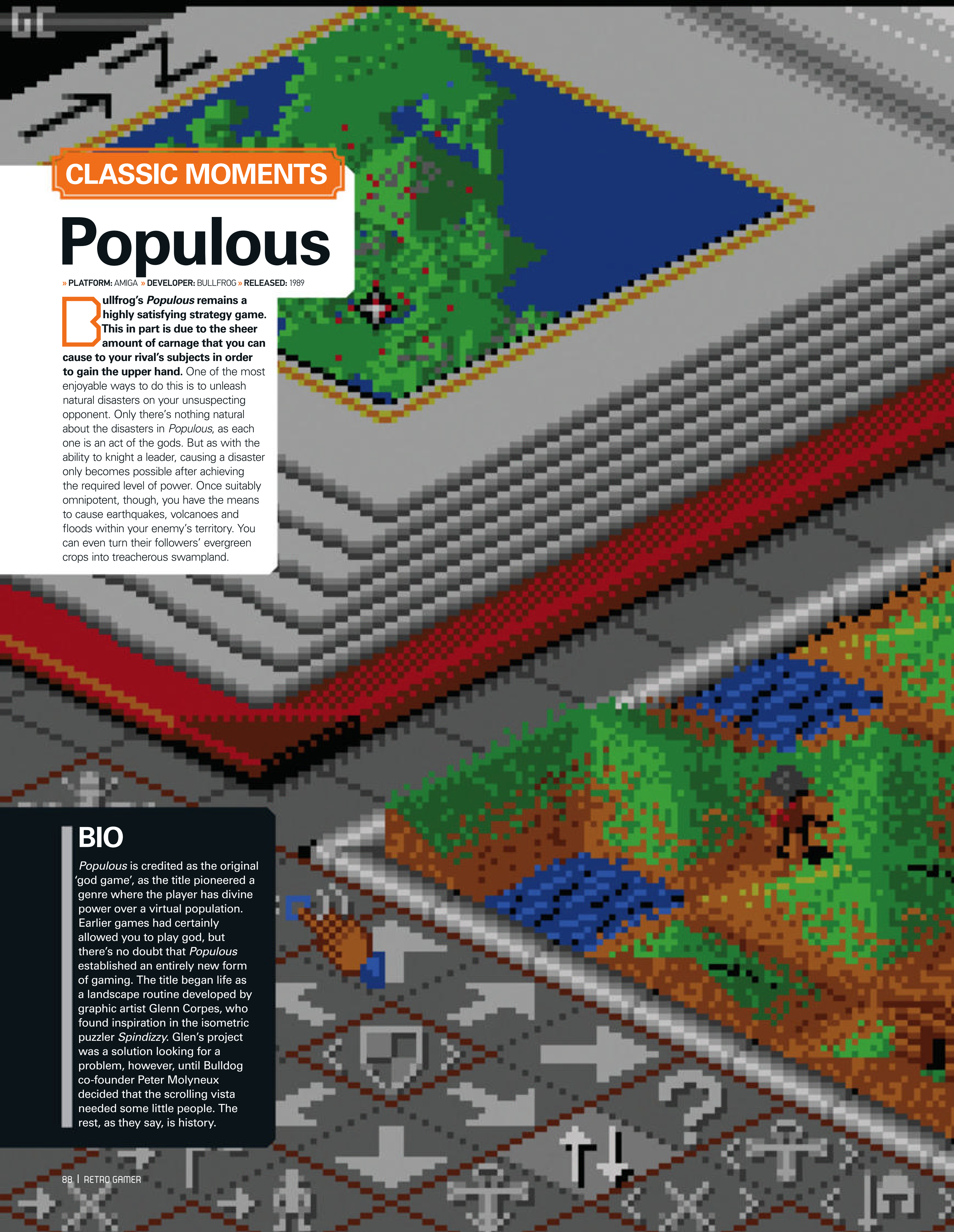


» [Xbox] Thanks, *Dino Crisis 3*. Thanks for killing off a franchise we really cared about…

▶ the frantic pace or the complex design of the ship, frequently leading to situations where you'd instantly double back on yourself as the viewpoint shifted or find yourself shooting enemies that aren't even on the screen with only the HUD to let you know when they were dead. Capcom, after careful consideration, we have decided not to endorse your game.

So have we seen the last of *Dino Crisis*? It's been a decade now without a new game, and even the most die-hard fans are starting to fear the worst. Capcom's VP of strategic planning and business development Christian Svensson recently spoke with IGN, and it doesn't sound too hopeful. "*Dino Crisis 3* I think is where it went off the rails," he said. "There are discussions, *Dino Crisis* comes up from time to time, but there isn't any burning desire from R&D or the business side to light that franchise back up again." And while we'd love to see some bright spark at Capcom extract the DNA from back when the series was good and bring it back to life, the fear that we could see another *Dino Crisis 3*-level disaster means that it's probably best that it remain extinct. And hey, at least we can still look at the pretty fossils.





CLASSIC MOMENTS

Populous

» **PLATFORM:** AMIGA » **DEVELOPER:** BULLFROG » **RELEASED:** 1989

Bullfrog's *Populous* remains a highly satisfying strategy game. This in part is due to the sheer amount of carnage that you can cause to your rival's subjects in order to gain the upper hand. One of the most enjoyable ways to do this is to unleash natural disasters on your unsuspecting opponent. Only there's nothing natural about the disasters in *Populous*, as each one is an act of the gods. But as with the ability to knight a leader, causing a disaster only becomes possible after achieving the required level of power. Once suitably omnipotent, though, you have the means to cause earthquakes, volcanoes and floods within your enemy's territory. You can even turn their followers' evergreen crops into treacherous swampland.

BIO

Populous is credited as the original 'god game', as the title pioneered a genre where the player has divine power over a virtual population. Earlier games had certainly allowed you to play god, but there's no doubt that *Populous* established an entirely new form of gaming. The title began life as a landscape routine developed by graphic artist Glenn Corpes, who found inspiration in the isometric puzzler *Spindizzy*. Glen's project was a solution looking for a problem, however, until Bulldog co-founder Peter Molyneux decided that the scrolling vista needed some little people. The rest, as they say, is history.



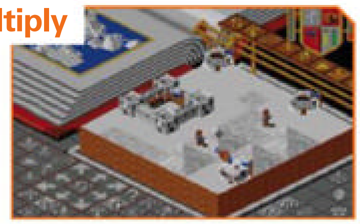
MORE CLASSIC POPULOUS MOMENTS

Raising the land



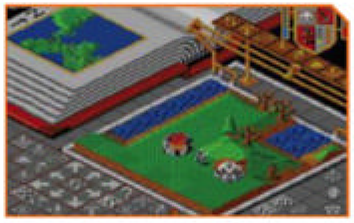
Before you recruit large numbers of followers, your godly abilities are somewhat limited. You can raise and lower the ground, but that's about it. So, the game's first moment of real satisfaction comes from levelling an area of land large enough for your devotees to build their first simple dwellings on. This sense of achievement only grows as your hard work allows your people to expand and develop into a thriving community.

Go forth and multiply



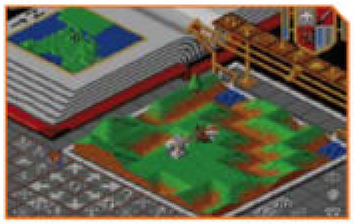
Populous revolves around a war between yourself and another god, but you won't defeat your opposite number unless you match or surpass their power. A god's power is based on their number of believers, and so the key to victory lies in producing more. Population growth happens naturally but, to speed things up, you can reduce a castle's crops in order to persuade people to leave and populate another area.

Arise, Sir Knight



The early stages of *Populous* require construction, as your loyal flock build homes and swell in number, but as your following and power increases so does your capacity for destruction. The leader of your people plays several important roles in the game, but none more so than when you knight him. Once knighted, he heads straight towards enemy territory, burning your opponent's buildings and killing their inhabitants as he goes.

Armageddon



Populous is all about proving yourself the greater of two deities, and there are several ways to go about it. The more satisfying, and certainly the most iconic of victories is won by initiating Armageddon. Once invoked, both populations fight to the death in the centre of the world. But, as you have no control over events, it's vital that your forces outnumber those of your opponents in order to avoid annihilation.

DESERT ISLAND DISKS

Paul Norman

What cherished games would you take to the island?

Paul Norman swapped chords for code and created a string of Commodore 64 hits for Cosmi. He takes Paul Drury on a tour of forbidden forests, Kafka-esque caverns and the fleshpots of the ancient Aztecs

In a deep American drawl that suggests a chain-smoking Garrison Keillor, Paul Norman tells us "I like to make people happy, I'm a passive guy. I'm not confrontational. If someone asks me to do something I was going to do anyway I'm like, 'sure no problem'."

"I saw my first computer, a VIC-20, in a music store," he croons. "It must have been the start of the Eighties and this little piece of plastic was like a glimpse of the future. I was as intrigued as anyone else. I'd seen *Star Trek*, I was a futurist, so we kind of expected computers to show up…"

Paul boldly bought one and headed off to create strange new worlds on Commodore's William Shatner-approved micro. He took his first two efforts – the maze-based *Psychophants* and a speedy asteroid-dodging affair – to show Synchro, a company he'd spotted in the pages of his local paper. It was duly impressed and asked Paul if they were written in machine code. "I said no but I was learning that. I had no idea what machine language was but I took the job anyway. I was doing what any respectable 17 year old straight out of school would do. Except I was 31 at the time."

Arriving for his first day at Synchro in the summer of 1982, he was sat at a desk in a windowless bunker and found an unfamiliar machine, a Commodore 64, before him. Relieved that it was, at least, the same shape as his beloved VIC-20, he shrugged, picked up the manual and with the simple instruction from his new bosses to 'make a bow and arrow game', Paul began work on what would become *Forbidden Forest*. Having had minimal contact with the emerging world of videogames, instead he drew inspiration from Errol Flynn epics and the monster movies of his childhood, using his musical talents to add a dynamic soundtrack to the archer-based action. With sudden lightning flashes, the sinister Demogorgon and the agonising, blood-spewing death throes you suffer when mauled by a giant spider, scaring players must surely have been a goal of horror film fan Paul.

"I had no goal," he replies, dryly. "I didn't know what I was doing. Half the time my nose was in a book on 6502 programming. I was running across the hall asking strangers, 'erm, how do you delay time?' Like, 'if I want to wait here for five seconds, how do you do that?' The game ideas came easy. All my time was taken on the technical stuff and the limitations were dramatic. I was coming from a motion picture sensibility so it was like, We're going to make *Ben Hur* and we're making it out of dominoes!"

Paul battled on bravely, barely noticing when Synchro was bought by Cosmi halfway through the game's development. Released in 1983, *Forbidden Forest* remains a highlight of the machine's early years but before Paul even saw the game on shop shelves, George Johnson, the head of Cosmi, who ran the business from his mansion in Pasadena, had tasked him with converting a *Mario Bros* clone called *Aztec Challenge* from the Atari 400/800 to the C64. Paul said yes to the job but then completely ignored the brief, creating his own multi-levelled take on the brutal trials of an Aztec warrior. We wonder whether his new paymasters were at all perturbed that he hadn't delivered what they had asked for.

"These weren't the great studio heads of Hollywood," deadpans Paul. "They weren't really interested in the particulars; they just wanted something they could sell. I knew I could do whatever the hell I wanted and they wouldn't care as long as it worked."

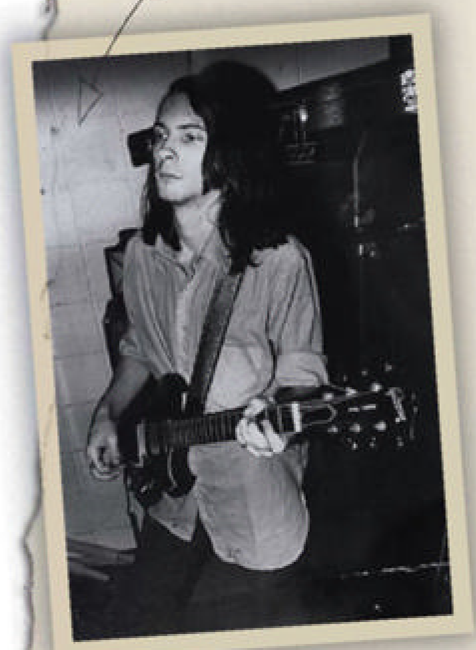
And *Aztec Challenge* worked beautifully, its seven diverse and demanding levels ranging from pyramid scaling to swimming with piranhas, all to a pounding score that really pumped up the tension. It also shared its predecessor's aesthetic sensibilities, a distinctive blocky impressionism, and a screen uncluttered by score or lives left. Was this rejection of such game display staples a conscious attempt to increase player immersion?

"If I'd come in as a game player, where the point was to earn points or beat certain times, I'm sure I'd have put them in like everybody else," he muses, "but that's not what I was trying to do. As always, I was trying to make a film, a little

Trivia

During his career as a rock musician in the Seventies, Paul played as part of Casey Kasem's roadshow. Sadly, he did not share a Scooby-snack with the voice of Shaggy during the tour.

Paul in 1978, before he swapped riffs for REM statements





“The first computer I ever saw was a VIC-20 and that little piece of plastic was like a glimpse of the future”

Paul recalls his first meeting with Commodore's million-selling baby

FIRST JOB
Working at a breakfast bar in an office building

CURRENT JOB
Nuclear engineer (in a strip club)

FAVOURITE FILM
Dr Strangelove

FAVOURITE ALBUM
The Doors' first album

FIRST COMPUTER/CONSOLE
VIC-20

FAVOURITE COMPUTER/CONSOLE
HAL

BEST GAMING ACHIEVEMENT
Having a South African helicopter instructor write to me and say he was using Super Huey in his lessons. It worried me

BEST-SELLING PRODUCT:
Super Huey

BEST HOLIDAY
Kauai

WHO YOU WANT TO BE STRANDED WITH
The guy that manufactures Real Dolls, as long as he brings his equipment

145235-46746546546546

SEX
M

NAME
Paul Norman

DATE OF BIRTH
'A week before Christmas, 1951'

PLACE OF BIRTH
Washington DC

BIOGRAPHY
A former musician, Paul picked up a VIC-20 in the early Eighties and soon progressed to the C64. He produced a string of titles for Cosmi, before a spell in CD-i development and as a producer for Sega of America. Currently, he builds bespoke websites and yearns to be a bouncer in a strip joint

Timeline

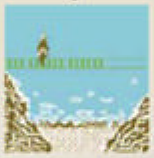
1983

FORBIDDEN FOREST
■ **YEAR:** 1983
■ **FORMAT:** C64
Paul's debut was a lo-fi triumph. Being molested by an array of nasties was almost as fun as slaying the Demogorgon with a single arrow.



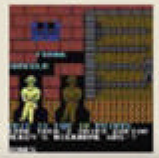
1983

AZTEC CHALLENGE
■ **YEAR:** 1983
■ **FORMAT:** C64
Brutal and surprisingly varied, this was Paul letting his imagination loose on Aztec history. You can read a full 'Making Of' feature in **RG**97.



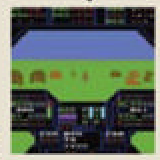
1984

THE TRIVIA MONSTER
■ **YEAR:** 1984
■ **FORMAT:** C64
Paul created this quiz game with the notable twist of punishing failure with public devouring by an angry beast. That should keep kids in school.



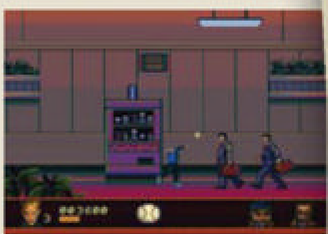
1985

SUPER HUEY
■ **YEAR:** 1985
■ **FORMAT:** C64
Paul's biggest selling title, intended to be as realistic as possible. "In an emergency, I could probably land a helicopter now", he concludes.



Praise for Paul

Here's what **Retro Gamer** has to say about Paul Norman's games…



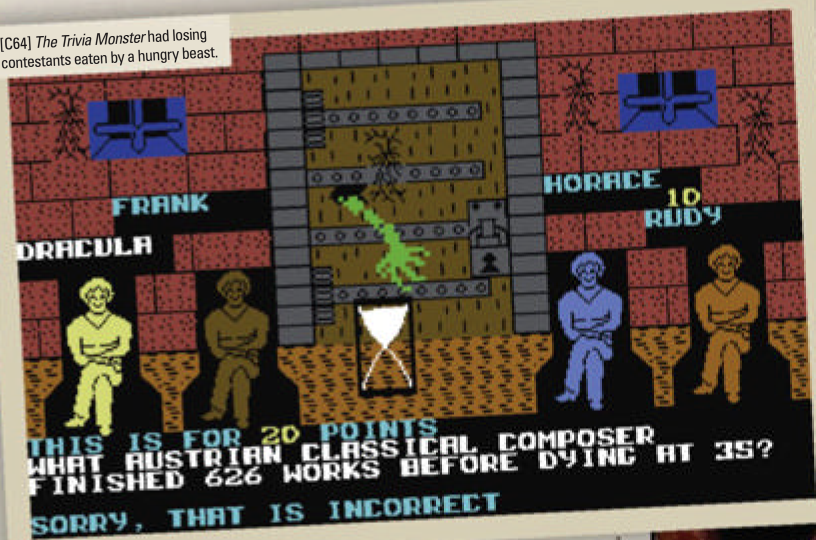


Darran Jones
While I've been fortunate enough to avoid the likes of *Home Alone 2*, I became very smitten with *Forbidden Forest*. It made many of my Amstrad games look absolutely amateurish in comparison, and it boasted a brooding cinematic feel that you typically didn't see. I even liked the sequel, although it's not quite as enjoyable.

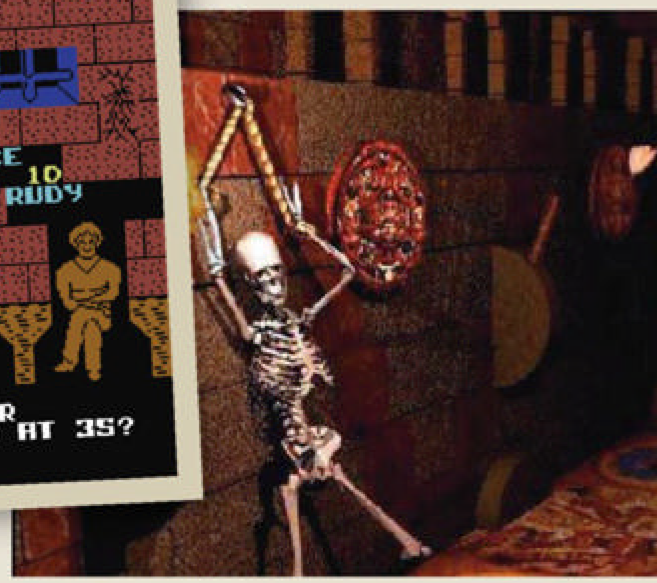




Paul Drury
You could always tell one of Paul's games on the C64, with their distinctive mix of stirring soundtrack, blocky ambition and dark humour. *Forbidden Forest* in particular holds a special place in my heart, and I recall doing my own 'archer dance' between levels. To find Paul as witty and entertaining off screen as he was on it has been a rare treat.



» [C64] *The Trivia Monster* had losing contestants eaten by a hungry beast.



adventure. If that's audience immersion… well, I didn't really mind if the whole audience was immersed permanently. I was entertaining myself. Anyway, who cares about scores? You're playing a game on your own. What, you gonna jump up and high five yourself?"

Paul continued his quest to bring the silver screen to the small screen of his C64 with 1984's *Caverns Of Khafka*, a tale of gung-ho archaeology with a debt to *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*. It was an ambitious title, with an expansive, moody subterranean setting and clever musical cues to help you on your way, but was rather spoiled by sudden unexplained deaths and a tendency for your intrepid explorer to become entangled in solid rock. "I was getting bored with the limitations of the equipment and trying to do things I, or the machine, wasn't technically capable of," mutters Paul. "I was a novice programmer making it up as I went along and, inevitably, if you do the right sequence of the wrong things you're going to get that result."

Paul emerged from the underground to produce *The Trivia Monster* later that year. Keen to cash in on the *Trivial Pursuit* craze, Cosmi told him to make a quiz game and Paul duly obliged, though couldn't resist adding in his own bit of social Darwinism: losing players were eaten by the titular beast. "I think it would be better for our socio-economic system if losers were eaten," he murmurs. "My friend and I spent two weeks coming up with 2,000 quiz questions. If we found a subject we'd milk it for all it was worth. There are over 200 questions in there about beavers."

A must-play for beaver enthusiasts, it also showed Paul's willingness to take on any task. In the same year, he converted *Q*Bert* clone *Slinky* to the C64 ("It was the same effort as making any other game, but I could give my imagination a rest", he quips) and then in 1985 was asked to revisit his debut release. *Beyond The Forbidden Forest* gave players the freedom to move in and out of the screen, lurk behind trees and even venture underground to face a terrifying four-headed hydra and a return battle with the ominous Demogorgon. The game was undoubtedly grander than its predecessor and showcased Paul's growing programming prowess, but bigger isn't always better.

"No-one likes it more than the original, including me," agrees Paul. "It was like when a little independent film company makes a movie that's low budget but has something special and then a studio comes along and remakes it. It's slick and full of Brad Pitts and just too packaged. It's like that."

Time for a new direction, and this time it was to the skies. George Johnson wanted to break into the lucrative flight simulator market, though typically Paul didn't approach his assignment in a straightforward manner. Aware of the popularity of TV show *Airwolf* and the movie *Blue Thunder*, he decided helicopters were far more interesting than aeroplanes and created *Super Huey*, a mission-based flight sim that became a huge commercial success. "I picked up


» There's a reason why music plays such a big part in Paul's games…

1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 2003

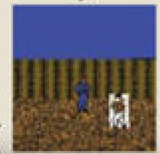
DEF CON 5
■ **YEAR:** 1987
■ **FORMAT:** C64
A response to Reagan's 'Star Wars' plan to take the Cold War into space. Visually, it recalls WarGames but thematically it was more Dr Strangelove.



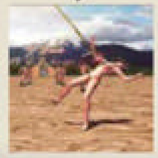
THE PRESIDENT IS MISSING
■ **YEAR:** 1988
■ **FORMAT:** C64
This ambitious thriller may be 25 years old, but its tale of Presidential kidnapping, Islamic terrorism and CIA conspiracies seems rather prescient.

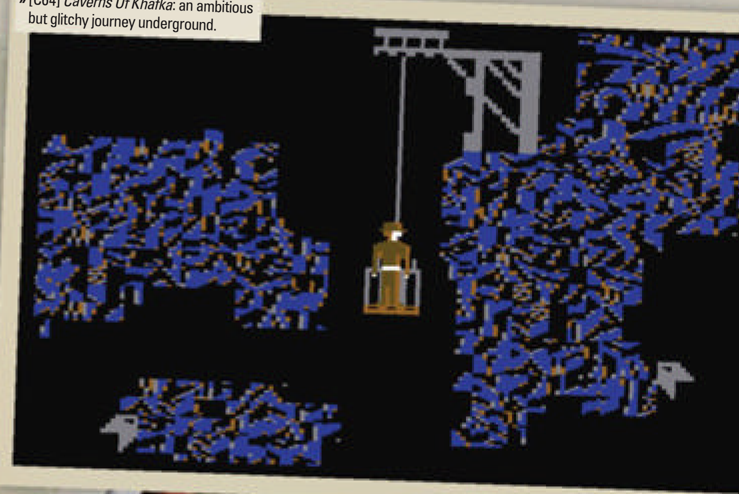


NAVY SEAL
■ **YEAR:** 1989
■ **FORMAT:** C64
His final game for the C64, this showcased, as Paul puts it, "What I'd learned from my time." A decent and rather overlooked title.

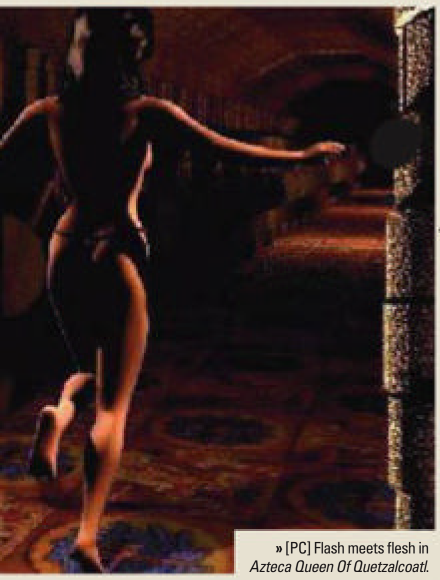


AZTECA QUEEN OF QUETZALCOATL
■ **YEAR:** 2003
■ **FORMAT:** PC
Paul returned to one of his favourite early titles in this flashy and brutally challenging remake.





» [C64] *Caverns Of Kafka*: an ambitious but glitchy journey underground.



» [PC] Flash meets flesh in *Azteca Queen Of Quetzalcoatl*.

> "Def Con 5 was trying to show you what sitting in a bunker wiping out civilisations with a touch of a button might be like. Now have fun"
>
> *Paul says, 'Let's play Global Thermonuclear War'*

Marketing Meltdown

"I'd seen the movie *The China Syndrome* and nuclear power was the subject of the day," explains Paul of his 1986 nuclear power plant simulator project. "I got researching and tried to make it a realistic simulation of running a power station. It was moody – the whole soundtrack was this low modulated hum and beeps from the computer screens. All these problems would pile up until the point of disaster and this cacophony of alarms would reign. Unfortunately, someone must've thought, 'Hey Chernobyl's in the news, let's capitalise on that!' So they called it *Chernobyl*. Toys R Us wanted it out of their stores that day. Who wants *Chernobyl* on their shelves? People died… it was released and then quickly unreleased."

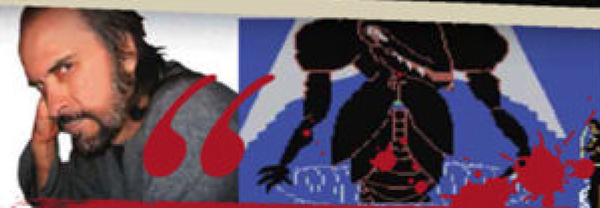


hints on how well it did from people on the inside," recalls Paul, wearily. "One of the middle managers said, 'Where's your new car?' I didn't have one at all at that time. It gave me cause for thought. Money's never been a great concern of mine, maybe to my detriment. It's not why I do things. But I did suggest to Johnson this might be a good time to share some of the cream off the top…"

The inevitable sequel followed in 1986, though Paul admits his heart wasn't in it. The whole idea of 'simulation' did intrigue him though, and with all the talk of President Reagan's 'Star Wars' Strategic Defence Initiative, he produced *Def Con 5*, a bleakly realistic look at the practicalities of nuclear war. "I wasn't taking a stand one way or another. I just believe that the further away you are from your subject, the less empathetic you tend to be, so I was trying to show you what sitting in a bunker wiping out civilisations with a touch of a button might be like. Now have fun."

Paul had less fun collaborating on *Navcom 6: The Persian Gulf Defence* with fellow Cosmi-ite Robert Bonifacio and none at all when his nuclear power plant simulator was given an unfortunate moniker, leading to its swift demise (see 'Marketing Meltdown'). His coding mojo was happily recharged by *The President Is Missing*, a multi-layered mystery, which came with an accompanying audio cassette containing additional clues. As a CIA agent, you had to sift through computer files and classified documents, trying to piece together the conspiracy and locate the kidnapped Head of State. "This brought me out of my stupor," says Paul. "It's my Tom Clancy effort and was closer to making a movie than a game. It won an award for originality but I was never told about it by Mr Johnson. He was the other 'FF' in my life…"

Relations with his Cosmi boss were indeed becoming strained as the C64 entered its dotage. His final release for the aging micro was 1989's *Navy Seal*, a neat collection of military mini-games in the *Aztec Challenge* mould, though Paul is somewhat dismissive of his swansong. "It was like Eric Clapton doing a comeback album after 20 years – very



Norman on Norman

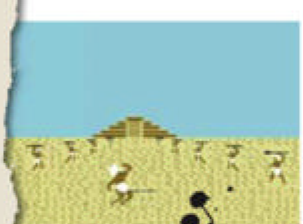
Paul picks his three favourite projects from his long career



■ **FORBIDDEN FOREST**
My first child would have to be on the list. I didn't know what was going to happen but gosh, it was nice. I didn't know it was going to be like this. I hope it happens again.



■ **THE PRESIDENT IS MISSING**
It's an intellectual exercise, quite different to my other stuff. It's a good story, it's original and it's a stirring justification for terrorism to the point that George Johnson said, 'You don't believe this stuff, do ya?' I was that convincing.



■ **AZTEC CHALLENGE**
There was something beyond the sum of its parts. The coincidence of music and building frustration in that game was put in by extra-terrestrial powers above the workings of my mind. If you could bottle that you'd have something that would get… mixed reviews.

DESERT ISLAND DISKS

Readers' Questions

Yakmag: What was the purpose of the 'archer dance' between levels in *Forbidden Forest*?
After a monster is killed, its spirit is destined to go one way or another and the dance has the power to direct that spirit to a good place.

Northway: Do you think your games were ahead of their time and would be more at home on modern consoles?
The fact that games are now major productions tantamount to producing a movie, I don't know how I'd make my games these days. It's such a collaborative atmosphere. Certainly, the power and presentation would have been appreciated. On my deathbed, I'm going to cross my fingers and think of ancient Greece so I don't think I'm before my time. I'm after my time.

Paranoid Marvin: Did you get any inside information when making *Def Con 5* or was it all based on your own hypothesis of what a satellite defence system might be like?
There was a great deal of talk about it published at the time. It was the topic of the day. I knew when I was in my twenties that the Cold War was a hoax, all done for profit and power, and SDI was just a rip-off, but I was a science fiction fan – how could I resist the idea of lasers in space?

Gman72: Did you enjoy creating sound and music with the SID chip?
It was like having a band of three people. I'll do the lead on kazoo, you over there accompany me on the mouth harp and the third guy, you run the garbage disposal. We'll see what we can come up with. But music is a hearty thing and it's amazing what it can go through and still come out as music.

PaulEMoz: In the light of Ray Harryhausen's recent death, were his films an influence on *Forbidden Forest*?
Of course. Long before I got anywhere near a computer I was watching *Mysterious Island* and *Jason And The Argonauts* – these were seminal influences in my psyche.

Merman: Are there any unfinished or unreleased games you can reveal?
I'm glad to put those rumours to rest. No.

» [Mega Drive] Paul handled production duties on *Home Alone 2* for the Mega Drive but he doesn't like to talk about it.



slick and professional and well done but not very special. The machine gun sounded pretty cool, though."

The limited audience for *Navy Seal* was probably more indicative of the dwindling 8-bit market than the game's worth. When Paul suggested his next project should be entitled *Doofus* and require the player to protect the eponymous idiot from his own stupidity, George Johnson declined and a seven year working relationship abruptly ended. "I invented that *Doofus* pitch on the spot probably for the purpose it ended up serving," he mutters. "That was the last thing I had to do with him apart from having to get my lawyer to write a letter to him asking for payment of outstanding royalties. I was told he came out with that cliché, 'he was like a son to me'. He was like a son of a bitch to me…"

As the Nineties dawned, Paul returned to his first loves of music, movies, writing new material and producing video work, until he was lured back into the games industry by a friend from his Cosmi days who'd ended up in CD-i development. He became screenwriter and soundtrack composer for *Murder Makes Strange Bedfellows*, an interactive mystery for the pioneering but ill-fated CD Rom console, and thoroughly enjoyed the whole multi-media experience. "I don't laugh. It's not in my nature. It would interrupt me from saying something funny. But for this one, I was rolling on the floor listening to them making fun of my material."

Paul worked on two further CD-i projects, the less than successful *The Case Of The Cautious Condor* and the downright disastrous *The Angel Of The City*, an unlikely tale of a kidnapped Spelling Bee hopeful. "It was just terrible," confesses Paul. "I listen to the soundtrack to that with the dialogue in about once every ten years and it's still awful. Money down the drain. It ended the careers of several people in CD-i development, including mine." It wasn't quite the end of Paul's videogame career, though.

Trivia

In the mid-Eighties, Paul produced a utility package for Cosmi snappily entitled 'Paul Norman's Computerized Publishing Company'. His cat, Jack, adorns the box

"With Forbidden Forest, it was like trying to make Ben Hur out of dominoes"

Paul did a fine job with those little virtual pieces…

He joined Sega of America, employed as a games producer by Mr and Mrs Nakamura, and was soon assigned the unenviable task of ensuring the dire *Home Alone 2* for the Genesis met its release deadline. "I got it in under the wire, as awful as it was," he grimaces. "It actually got an award for 'Best Game From The Worst Movie', which I took as a compliment. I then started working on an original idea of mine called *Molecule Man*. They liked the title but didn't know what it was about. I'd been reading about quantum physics and I was fascinated with all those sub-atomic particles. I was creating characters from quarks and neutrinos. Then I got a nasty email from Nancy Nakamura saying they were in the business of entertaining not educating. After that, somehow the romance had gone and we were destined to part…"

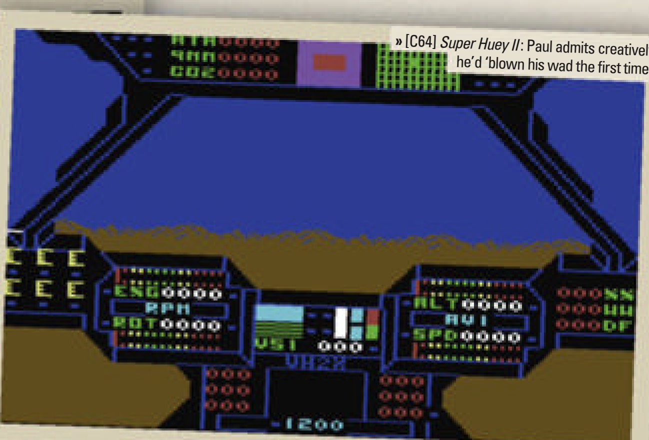
Since the mid-Nineties, Paul has busied himself with a myriad of creative endeavours encompassing music, video and web design. He even revisited one of his old favourites in 2003 with *Azteca Queen Of Quetzalcoatl*, which boasted nudity and gore throughout its brutal challenges. If you visit www.saxonedge.com you'll see some of his web work and we urge you to follow the link to Digittarius, his own personal site. As well as more on the man's remarkable history, you'll find a sweet selection of games to play, including *Asteroid Alley* and a whole movie quiz, both alluding to entries in his back catalogue. We especially smiled at the ironic 'Coming Soon' poster for *Psychophants*, his very first, and still unreleased, VIC-20 game. Do all these nods to past glories indicate a lasting love of your time in the videogames business, Paul?

"Mr Drury, what else am I supposed to nod to? That's all I have!" And for once, we can actually hear laughter crackling down the line…

Thanks to Martyn Carroll for his help with this piece.



Paul converted Q*Bert clone Slinky from the Atari to the C64, adding a few touches of his own in the process

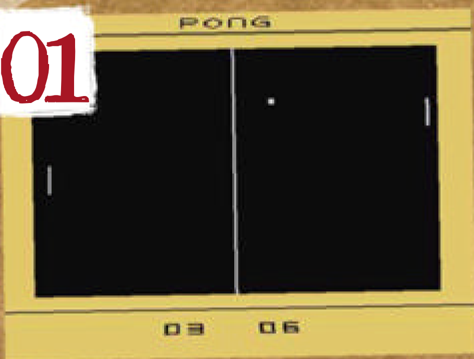


» [C64] *Super Huey II*: Paul admits creatively he'd 'blown his wad the first time'.

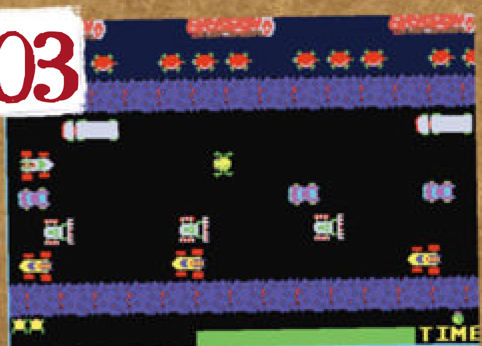
Paul Norman

Desert Island Disks

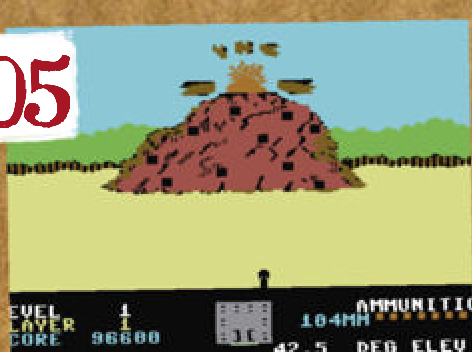
The games that Paul Norman just couldn't live without and why he loves them

01


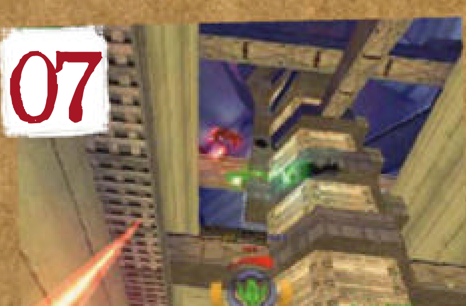
02


03


04


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08


01 Pong (ARCADE)

I enjoyed *Pong*. I played in bars and a friend of mine, a drummer, had bought one of the little portable consoles. I had an uncanny ability to beat people. That's probably why I liked it, not because of the game itself but because I could win.

02 Combat (VCS)

I don't spend my Saturdays at the arcade and never did. I'm not a videogame player. But I did find this very enjoyable. Suspenseful and relaxing.

03 Frogger (ARCADE)

Everyone knows I like *Frogger*. I liked the comedy of it. The whole point of trying so hard not to get your frog squished and when it does, it's very funny. It has a frustration factor similar to the first round in *Aztec Challenge*. And I'm a big fan of roadkill.

04 3D Pool (PC)

I like playing 8-ball in a bar but if I can't have that, I did like this Shockwave one you can play on the internet. Am I a hustler? Apart from with *Navcom 6*, I've never prostituted myself.

05 Beach-Head (C64)

I liked the simplicity, the ranging and targeting and the whole aspect of setting up the distances of your fire. I'm sure there were other C64 games I liked but I forget what they were so I'll take this.

06 F16 Combat Pilot (PC)

I did like this flight simulator. In general they're boring, especially the more realistic they are, but this was reasonably simple to fly, and the fact they put in scenarios like pursuers and ground bases made it more like a game. I just liked flying it around. And it's helping to fill up this list.

07 Descent (PC)

A favourite entirely because my choices are so few would be *Descent*. It's 3D, it's an evolution from *Doom* and *Wolfenstein*, which led to pretty much everything we have now. The particular thing I liked is that, because you had complete control, you could go behind things or into corners and just wait. And think. And feel the environment. Sit back and relax. Create your own tension, knowing they were out there. It was a movie kind of suspense created just through that mechanic.

08 Phantasmagoria: A Puzzle Of Flesh (PC)

You were an explorer in this house, finding iconic horror type things, with semi-video interludes. I don't claim to have enjoyed this as entertainment; rather I saw it as a step in the right direction for games, that is, moving toward interactive movies. So I'll stand by my selection.









Tomb Raider

INDIANA JONES FOR THE GIRL POWER GENERATION

RETROREVIVAL



» PC
» Core Design
» 1996

Everyone went absolutely gaga for Crystal Dynamics' recent reinterpretation of Core Design's Lara Croft, and rightfully so. It was a great game that rebooted a stagnant franchise and proved that it's perfectly possible to create believably scripted videogame characters.

It's worth remembering that Lara's debut produced similar results back in 1996, and while she might not have been as well characterised as Rhianna Pratchett's take on the popular heroine, she was still a much-needed breath of fresh air in a digital world typically dominated by men.

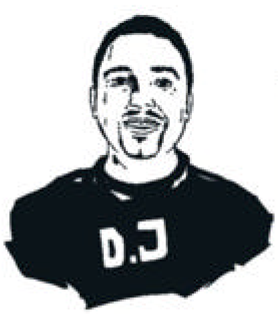
The key aspect of the original *Tomb Raider* wasn't Lara's breasts (which comically got larger with each subsequent sequel), but its sheer sense of immersion. 3D worlds on the scale seen in *Tomb Raider* were still fresh and exciting, and there was something magical about exploring the huge tombs that Lara found herself in.

And then, of course, there's the deadly T-Rex attack, a moment that can still get your heart racing. Yes, he looks hilarious in today's world of high-definition visuals, but this beast was absolutely terrifying when you stumbled across him in 1996.

Parts of *Tomb Raider* have aged poorly, particularly the errant camera and the clunky controls, but the sheer sense of exploration it offers is still hard to beat. *



RETRORATED



>>Lots of re-issues this month. Capcom returns to Resident Evil: Revelations, Bioware's Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic hits iOS, while Andrew Morrish's superb Super Puzzle Platformer finally gets a Steam release. We also get to check out the latest Wario game

Super Puzzle Platformer Deluxe

BLOCKS AND GUNS COLLIDE IN SPECTACULAR FASHION

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PC
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £5.99 (STEAM)
- » **PUBLISHER:** ADULT SWIM GAMES
- » **DEVELOPER:** ANDREW MORRISH
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



It's entirely possible that you'll have already experienced this delightful little game from Andrew Morrish, as it started off as a free Flash release. Thanks to its popularity, Andrew has returned to *Super Puzzle Platformer Plus*, adding a host of new features and releasing it on Steam. The end result is a ridiculously addictive puzzle game that is well worth its £6 asking price.

As its name suggests, *Super Puzzle Platformer Deluxe* is an interesting blend of both the puzzle and platformer genres. Games take place in an enclosed eight-block-wide area, and random blocks continually fall from the top of the screen. You then run and jump around the screen, avoiding falling blocks, while lining up suitable combos of coloured blocks that you can then destroy for bonus points.

There are three different colour blocks in total, and they become harder to destroy as more of them link together. Destroying blocks increases your levels, which in turn boosts your gun's power and your bonus multiplier. Get hit by a falling block and your cute avatar will power down to his previous level, dying completely if he's still on level one when he gets hit. The floor is also dangerous, being a row of deadly spikes that will instantly kill your avatar if he comes into contact with it. You're separated from instant death by a single row of blocks when the game starts, but the frantic nature of *Super Puzzle Platformer Deluxe* means it's all too easy to destroy the very blocks you're standing on.



» [PC] While the multiplayer mode is very entertaining, it's not quite up to the same high standards of classics like *Tetris* and the superb *Twinkle Star Sprites*.

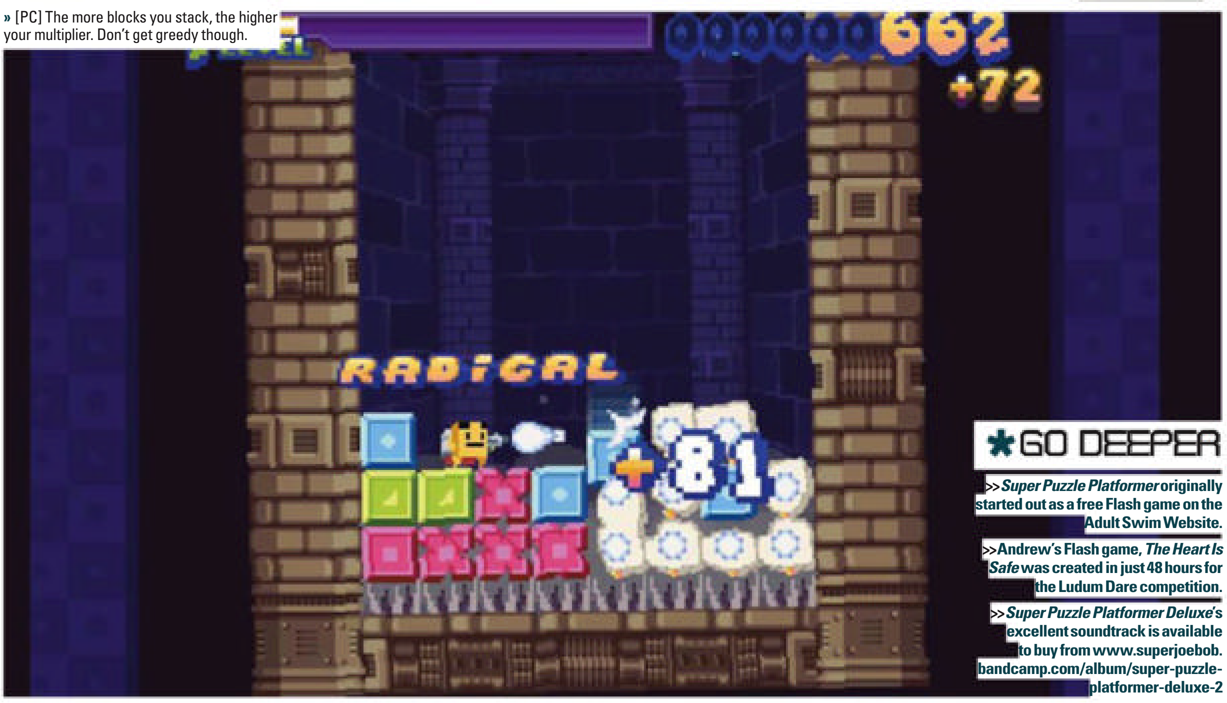
» [PC] There are six different worlds to be found in *Super Puzzle Platformer Deluxe*, each with their own soundtracks and enemies.







» [PC] The more blocks you stack, the higher your multiplier. Don't get greedy though.



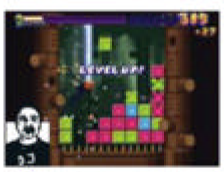
GO DEEPER

>>*Super Puzzle Platformer* originally started out as a free Flash game on the Adult Swim Website.

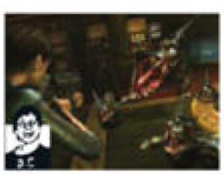
>>Andrew's Flash game, *The Heart Is Safe* was created in just 48 hours for the Ludum Dare competition.

>>*Super Puzzle Platformer Deluxe*'s excellent soundtrack is available to buy from www.superjoebob.bandcamp.com/album/super-puzzle-platformer-deluxe-2

PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
Super Puzzle Platformer Deluxe
A refreshingly original puzzler that I've found impossible to put down since discovering it on Steam.



DAVID
Resident Evil: Revelations
While the port is of a high standard, the handheld origins are clear. It's still miles better than *Resident Evil 6*, mind.

More competitive puzzle games to try



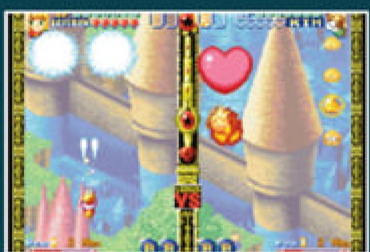
Tetris (1984)

Tetris remains one of the best competitive games around. There's nothing more satisfying than punishing an opponent by dumping a load of blocks on their part of the screen.



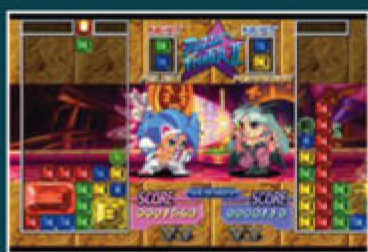
Puzzle Bobble (1994)

Bub and Bob get competitive in this ace puzzle game. Like *Tetris*, you'll dump stuff on your opponent's screen as you clear your own. Don't expect to remain friends after a lengthy play session.



Twinkle Star Sprites (1996)

This shooter/puzzler hybrid is great fun. Shooting chains of enemies sends them to your opponent's screen, who can then shoot them back at you. Needless to say you can create some insane rallies that can last for ages.



Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo HD Remix (2007)

Another block variant, although this time you're trying to create bigger and bigger gem blocks. A particularly nice touch is how your super-deformed Street Fighter will pull off recognisable special moves.

If falling blocks and spikes were all you had to worry about then *Super Puzzle Platformer Deluxe* might be quite simple, but Morrish has added a whole range of static and moving enemies that will continually keep you on your toes. Cannons fire bullets in numerous directions, detonators explode if your avatar or a falling block lands on it (taking out anything in the vicinity), while ghosts roam across the screen and must be avoided at all costs. Enemy drops increase as you level up, ensuring that *Super Puzzle Platformer Deluxe* constantly challenges you.

Despite the entirely random nature of Morrish's game, it never feels unfair, mainly because the controls throughout are superb. Incredibly tight, they allow you to get out of all sorts of tricky scenarios, while a number of costume unlocks give your avatar new skills that range from a handy double jump to a jetpack that allows you to stay in the air for longer periods of time.



» [PC] Leaving blocks for as long as possible means more points. They're also harder to destroy though, meaning you may get inadvertently crushed.

Although the core gameplay of *Super Puzzle Platformer Deluxe* remains essentially the same as the original Flash game, Morrish has added plenty of extras that easily justify the price upgrade. Score a high enough combo chain and you'll create a gem drop. Earning a set number of gems will allow you to progress through the game's six worlds, each of which have their own soundtracks and monsters. There are also a far larger number of suits to unlock, as well as a new challenge room that has you performing all sorts of ridiculously tough tasks if you want to complete the 18 available challenges.

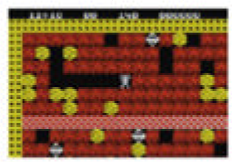
Super Puzzle Platformer Deluxe also introduces a brand new two-player mode. The game plays exactly the same as before, but clearing larger chains will drop bigger hazards on your opponent's screen. It's not quite as polished as *Tetris* or *Twinkle Star*, but it still makes for a highly addictive break from the main game, and it's all too easy to lose hours in a heated competition. There's no current option to play online, which is a little bit of a shame, but that's the only real downside to the enjoyable two-player mode.

BRIEF HISTORY

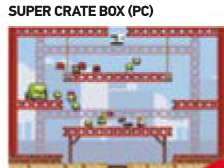
» Andrew Morrish has been working on *Super Puzzle Platformer Deluxe* for a number of years now. It started off as a Flash game which went through two revisions before appearing on Steam. It's unclear at this time if the game will be heading to other platforms but we hope so, as it's ideal for the handheld market.

WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
BOULDER DASH (SPECTRUM)



▼ SOMETHING NEW
SUPER CRATE BOX (PC)



The graphics themselves are simple and effective, evoking a nice retro feel that reminds us of an old Master System game. Bright primary colours ensure everything is easy to see, while each level has its own distinct theme, ranging from a cold-looking ice world to a haunted mansion. Far more impressive is *Super Puzzle Platformer Deluxe*'s superb chip-tune soundtrack. Created by Landon Podbielski, it's absolutely fantastic, and sounds like something that would have been created for the Mega Drive or Amiga in their heydays. It's brilliant, and is worth buying the game just to hear it.

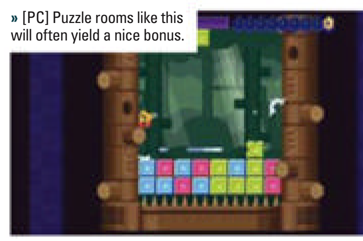
Mixing distinct genres isn't the easiest of tasks, but Morrish pulls it off with great aplomb. While the multiplayer mode isn't quite as hectic as we'd have liked, there's no denying that the core gameplay of *Super Puzzle Platformer Deluxe* (which has now been refined three times) is fantastic. Every single mistake is always your own and, while you can occasionally get caught out by a stray falling block, most deaths in the game come from your own stupid greed. Highly addictive and packed with replay value, this is an excellent puzzler that needs to be downloaded immediately.

In a nutshell

***Super Puzzle Platformer Deluxe* is a great mash-up of two genres that boasts great controls, a solid challenge and some outstanding chip tunes. The multiplayer is a little weak, but it remains an excellent little puzzle game.**

>> Score **90%**

retro GAMER SIZZLER



» [PC] Puzzle rooms like this will often yield a nice bonus.



» [PC] When blocks fall down like this you need to get to the right position quickly.

Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic

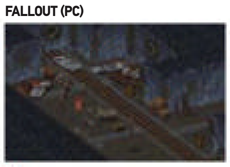
ASPYR BREATHES NEW LIFE INTO BIOWARE'S STUNNING RPG

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** iOS (iPAD ONLY)
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PC, XBOX & MAC
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £6.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **DEVELOPER:** ASPYR
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
FALLOUT (PC)



▼ SOMETHING NEW
DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS (PC)



BRIEF HISTORY

» Augustine Yip, Greg Zeschuk and Ray Muzyka founded BioWare in 1995. While BioWare's first game was a mech simulator called *Shattered Steel*, it hit pay dirt with the critically acclaimed *Baldur's Gate*, which made both *Dungeons & Dragons* and the Western RPG cool again. It's since created some of the biggest RPGs of all time, from *Neverwinter Nights* to *Mass Effect* and *Dragon Age*.



It's amazing to think that BioWare's magnificent adaptation of the *Star Wars* universe is now a decade old. It's equally amazing to realise that after all this time it's still an utterly superb RPG, one of BioWare's best in fact – high praise indeed when you consider what the studio has done in the time since *KOTOR*'s release.

For those who have never played BioWare's game, *KOTOR* is set some 4,000 years before the events of the original Saga, and portrays a time where the Sith were just as powerful as the Jedi. Your character wakes up on a ship that is being attacked by Darth Malak and must assemble a team of characters to rescue a pivotal Jedi that went missing in the attack. It's a superb story that visits some of the most popular locations from the films and marries them to strong narrative and interesting characters. There are plenty of twists and turns along the way, while the structured choice options (many of which will have instant or later impacts on the game) and the way you can build relationships with your companions paved the way for many later BioWare games.

Developer Aspyr has done a superb job with its adaptation of *KOTOR*, using numerous work-arounds to ensure that the ten-year-old game plays well with its new touch controls. A simple forward swipe will send your character running forward, while nearby objects and characters can be interacted with by simply touching them. Narration is handled in a similar way – your dialogue options appear at the bottom of the screen like normal, while new selectable virtual buttons are now found on the right side of the screen. Aspyr's integration is, for the most part, unobtrusive, and in many ways *KOTOR* now feels like a point-and-click adventure. Add in the fact that the turn-based combat system of old is perfectly suited to the new platform and Aspyr's impressive port leaves us hungry for *KOTOR's* brilliant sequel.

The only real downside to *KOTOR* is that there have been no attempts to upgrade the game graphically, meaning it looks a little rough around the edges and washed out at times. The engine also chugs in places, but never enough that it ruins your enjoyment. All in all, *KOTOR* is a great port of a great game and if you have an iPad 2 or 3 you should download it immediately.

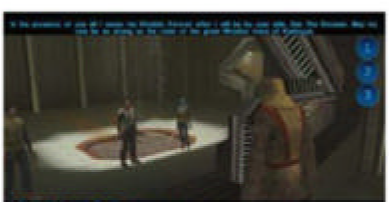
» [iOS] The turn-based gameplay of the original game works exceptionally well on iOS, allowing you to really plan each battle.



In a nutshell

The graphics feel a little dated, but the controls have been well integrated, allowing you to enjoy one of the greatest *Star Wars* games of all time. A great port of a great game.

>> **Score 92%**



» [iOS] The text is a little hard to read on screen, but that's one of the few niggles we have with this superb port.



» [IOS] You'll need to regularly switch between characters to get the best out of them during skirmishes.



» [iOS] If you're not careful, certain enemies will absolutely decimate your team.

GO DEEPER

The facts behind Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic

>> **This isn't the first *Star Wars* game Aspyr has worked on. It also previously handled the PC and Mac ports of *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed.***

>> ***KOTOR's* enjoyable story was by Drew Karpyshyn. He's also worked on *Jade Empire*, in addition to the *Baldur's Gate* and *Mass Effect* franchises.**

>> ***Knights Of The Old Republic* has the D20 roleplaying system at its core. You never see it, but it determines the outcomes of all actions in the game.**

Resident Evil: Revelations HD

CAPCOM'S MINI ADVENTURE HITS THE BIG SCREEN

» FEATURED SYSTEM: PC **» ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** XBOX 360, PS3, WII U **» RELEASED:** OUT NOW **» PRICE:** £29.99-39.99 **» PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM **» DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM/TOSE **» PLAYERS:** 1-2



>> If *Resident Evil 6* represented a large gaping wound in Capcom's classic franchise, then *Resident Evil: Revelations HD* is the plaster that could start the healing process for the popular series. This HD port is extremely polished and, while it does highlight some of the weaknesses of the original 3DS game, it's a far, far better adventure than *Resident Evil 6*.

Like more recent games in the series, *Revelations* is action orientated, meaning that fighting takes priority over scares. There are still plenty of creepy moments in *Revelations*, with the huge deserted ship you explore being a fitting substitute for the original's creepy mansion. Combat, for the most part, is quite tense, and *Revelations* proves challenging. It makes the mistake of using too few enemies and having large sections of combat take place in bland open areas, but the fighting itself is surprisingly robust and fun, with the guns in particular feeling nice and meaty.

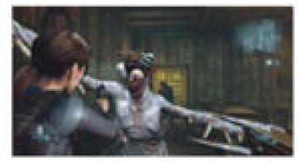
This is most notable in 'Raid Mode', a fun blaster that has you clearing marked areas as quickly as possible. There are a variety of different characters to unlock, numerous weapons and add-ons to discover and it offers plenty of replay value – particularly when played with a friend.

Graphically, *Revelations* impresses as well. While there's no denying the handheld origins of its visuals, they still manage to look good, providing plenty of detail and a nice smooth experience. This is most evident when playing on a well-optimised PC. Audio is also good, with satisfying gun noises and a creepy soundtrack that distracts from the rather bland voice acting.

Resident Evil: Revelations HD suffers due to repeated enemies and basic puzzles and combat, but there's no denying that it feels more like a conventional old-school *Resi* game than recent efforts. Here's hoping Capcom can get the series back on track.

>> Score 76%





» [PC] You'll have various partners throughout your adventure but they're rarely useful, leaving you to do all the hard work yourself.

» [PC] Raid Mode is great fun, allowing you to revisit previously completed levels with beefed-up characters.



» [PC] The bosses in *Revelations* are quite bland compared to earlier games. They're designed more to mop up bullets than to provide a significant challenge.

Hyper Breaker Turbo

BREAKOUT IS GIVEN A NEXT-GEN MAKEOVER

» FEATURED SYSTEM: iOS **» ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** NA **» RELEASED:** OUT NOW **» PRICE:** £1.49 **» PUBLISHER:** BEJOY **» DEVELOPER:** BARRY KOSTJENS **» PLAYERS:** 1



>> There are seemingly hundreds of iOS *Breakout* clones available, so a new game needs to be a little different from the norm if it's going to stand out. *Hyper Breaker Turbo* easily manages this, being a fresh take on the popular genre that is now nearly 40 years old.

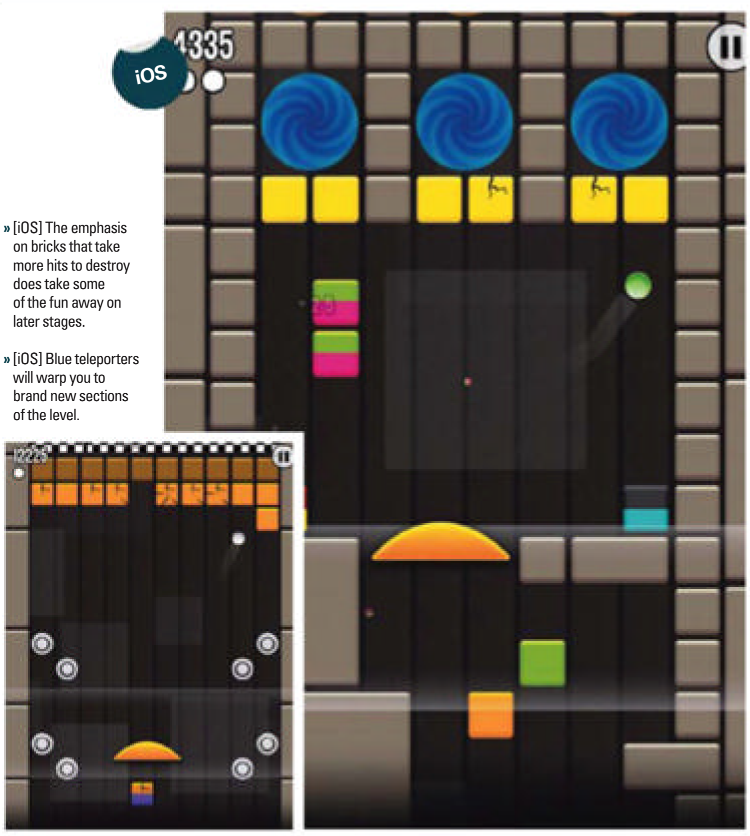
Unlike similar games, *Hyper Breaker Turbo* dispenses with the single screen wells of bricks of old, instead presenting you with a lengthier stage, one that is often many screens high. You'll be given a brief overview of the course before you start, and then must use that knowledge, as well as your reflexes, to clear each stage as quickly as possible.

Incentive is provided via a pool of lava that slowly eats up the stage as you make your way through it. Miss your ball and it will disappear into the molten substance, robbing you of one of your three lives. There are 25 levels on each stage and they get more devious as you progress, featuring dangerous springs, teleporters and all manner of crazy objects that will try your patience and your sanity.

One interesting aspect of Barry Kostjens' game is that you can actually move your bat on both the X and Y-axis. This is particularly useful, as you can powerfully hit a returning ball to make it punch through tougher blocks, often with a single hit. Add in a selection of interesting power-ups that range from smart bombs to ones that turn your ball into an erratic unpredictable flying projectile of doom and *Hyper Break Turbo* becomes highly refreshing.

Later levels drag the longer you play (an issue with the genre in general) and there's an annoying emphasis on harder-to-destroy blocks as play continues, but it remains an entertaining take on an ancient and well trodden genre.

>> Score 70%

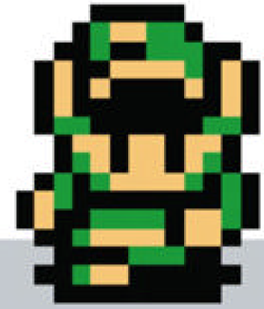


» [iOS] The emphasis on bricks that take more hits to destroy does take some of the fun away on later stages.

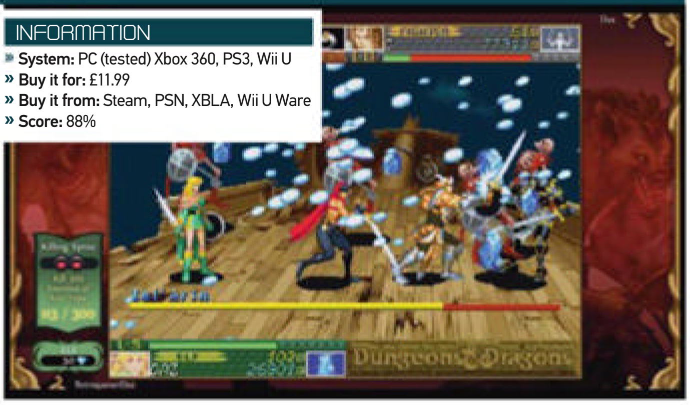
» [iOS] Blue teleporters will warp you to brand new sections of the level.

RETROROUND-UP

>> Every month we look at all the classics and latest releases that are available to buy or download



DOWNLOAD OF THE MONTH



INFORMATION

» **System:** PC (tested) Xbox 360, PS3, Wii U
» **Buy it for:** £11.99
» **Buy it from:** Steam, PSN, XBLA, Wii U Ware
» **Score:** 88%

Dungeons & Dragons: Chronicles Of Mystara

During the Eighties and Nineties, Capcom was king of the scrolling fighter. Starting off with the likes of *Final Fight*, it continued to hone its craft with classics such as *King Of Fighters* and *Knights Of The Round* until it reached its creative peak with *Alien Vs Predator* and its two games based on the *Dungeons & Dragons* licence.

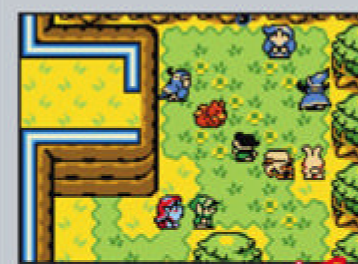
While the former is absent, Iron Galaxy has been tasked with unleashing *D&D* on a new generation of gamers. The end result is superb, building on the elements it added to the likes of *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition* to create a well-rounded package.

Tower Of Doom is arguably the weaker of the pair, due to its high difficulty level and poor balance between the four characters. It still manages to be great fun thanks to a wide selection of spells and weapons, imposing boss fights and beautiful environments, but there's no escaping the fact that it's an arcade game, designed to part you from your cash.

Shadow Over Mystara feels more like a console game and is more balanced as a result. It massively improves on the already stunning animation of *TOD*, has far more satisfying boss battles and a better range of characters. There are more special moves and items, challenging fights and the offer of plenty of replay value.

Iron Galaxy has done an impeccable job with its port. There's a choice of filters and cabinet viewpoints on offer, new achievements have been added and there's a variety of cool artwork to unlock. It's the multiplayer that's the most fun however, and while we occasionally noticed lag when playing online, for the most part it's very good indeed.

>> OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



The Legend Of Zelda: Oracle Of Ages

» **System:** Game Boy Color
» **Buy it for:** £5.39
» **Buy it from:** Virtual Console (3DS)
» **Score:** 91%

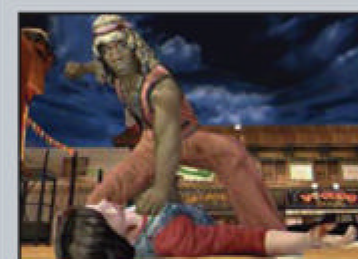
» You really need to buy both games to get the most of out Capcom's *Zelda* adventures, but they still hold up on their own. *Oracle Of Ages* deals with time travel, with Link zipping back and fourth through eight clever dungeons. *Ages* is a lot more puzzle-based than *Seasons* and is preferable for it, and while it lacks the magic of Nintendo's own *Zelda* games it's still highly recommended.



The Legend Of Zelda: Oracle Of Seasons

» **System:** Game Boy Color
» **Buy it for:** £5.39
» **Buy it from:** Virtual Console (3DS)
» **Score:** 88%

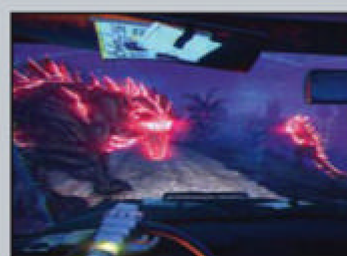
» Although Capcom does a great job of capturing the essence of past *Zelda* games, *Oracle Of Seasons* doesn't quite posess the same polish as earlier titles like *Link's Awakening*. While it still features some great dungeon designs and fun boss fights, it's not quite as strong as its counterpart. It remains to be a great handheld adventure however.



The Warriors

» **System:** PS2
» **Buy it for:** £7.99
» **Buy it from:** PSN
» **Score:** 77%

» We've no idea what was going through Rockstar's head when it decided to release *The Warriors* 26 years after the original film, but we're glad it did. You can count the number of genuinely ace 3D scrolling fighters on one hand, and *The Warriors* is easily up there. While the combat is brutal and immensely satisfying, Rockstar also adds plenty of smaller side-missions to ensure nothing gets too boring.



Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon

» **System:** PC (tested) PS3, Xbox 360
» **Buy it for:** £11.99
» **Buy it from:** Steam, uPlay, Origin
» **Score:** 81%

» While it looks like a current-gen game and shares its title with one of last year's biggest titles, *Blood Dragon* feels more akin to the likes of *Duke Nukem* and *Serious Sam*. It's the loving tributes to Eighties cinema that makes *Blood Dragon* such fun to play, with references to *Predator*, *Tron*, *The Empire Strikes Back* and many other classics. You even have Michael Biehn playing the cyborg lead. Nutty, silly fun.



XCOM: Enemy Unknown

» **System:** iOS » **Buy it for:** £13.99 » **Buy it from:** App Store » **Score:** 87%

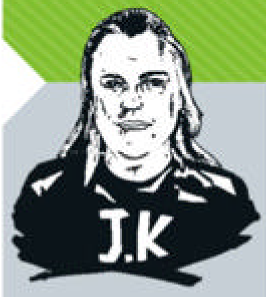
For those who are unaware, *XCOM: Enemy Unknown* is an iOS port of the excellent strategy game that was released late last year on PC, PS3 and Xbox 360. It was a cracking strategy game that featured absorbing tactical gameplay, and 2K China has managed to cram it onto Apple hardware with only a few concessions.

Although there are small sections of resource management, *XCOM* is mainly about tactical combat, and it works exceptionally well. The AI is stiff and challenging but never unfair, and you'll get an immense sense of satisfaction from every hard fought battle. Weapons and armour can be upgraded and new areas can be added to your base, while the loss of soldiers that fall in battle really hits you hard.

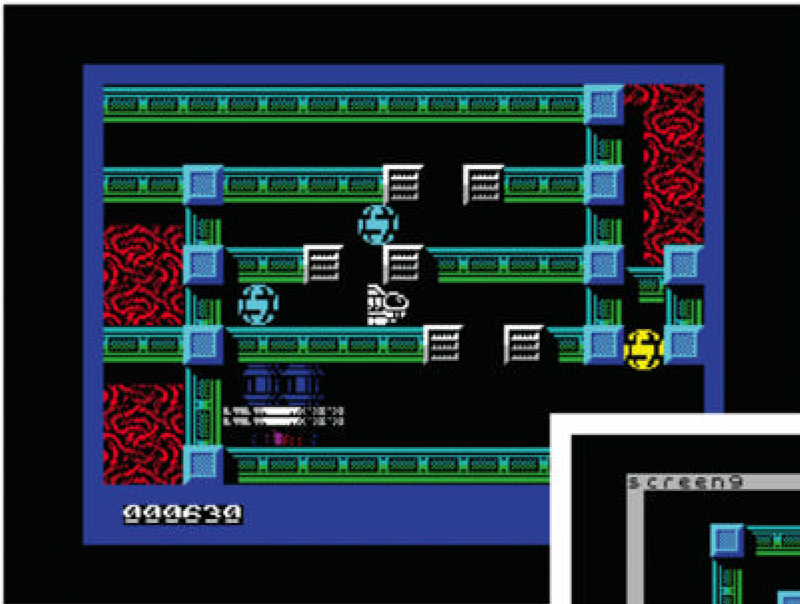
The graphics have obviously taken a hit with this iOS port, but otherwise it's very good indeed, with only a few niggly control issues and a large price-tag taking the shine off an otherwise exceptional strategy game.

HOMEBREW

>> The scene's latest news and reviews



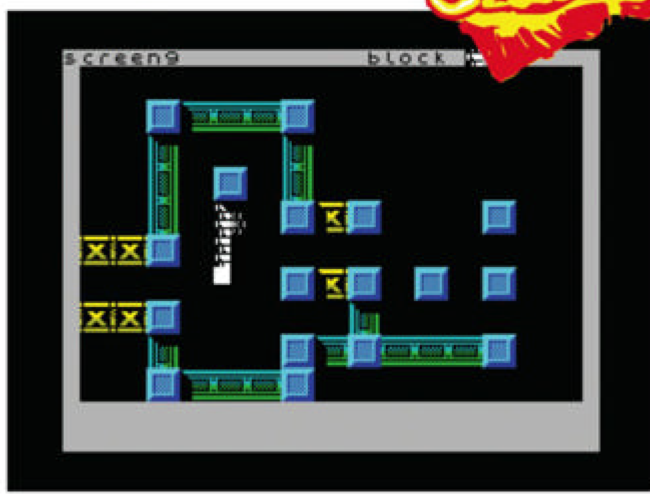
One thing I've noticed happening recently is developers getting themselves in too deep. Oh Mummy for the Mega Drive is a case in point – the developers didn't expect anywhere near the cartridge pre-orders they got and, because they weren't corresponding with customers, delays in shipping earned them a lot of negative feedback online. There are some lessons for would-be publishers to learn from these mistakes



» [Spectrum] Here's one we made earlier.



» [Spectrum] Tools of the trade.



» [Spectrum] Little lost and found.



» [Spectrum] Follow your saxophone.

ARCADE GAME DESIGNER 4.0

HOW TO MAKE FIENDS AND INFLUENCE DEVICES



FORMAT: SPECTRUM 128K
DEVELOPER: JONATHAN CAULDWELL
LINK: WWW.KIKSTART.EU/AGD4-SPEC
RELEASE: 2013
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK



» [Spectrum] Remember to save often.

Jonathan Cauldwell's *Arcade Game Designer* is a few years old now. However, the latest version was released recently, and so it seemed like a good excuse to see how it fares. *AGD 4* is actually a series of editors which have been compiled into a package to create 2D action games – either single or flick screen – but after that it leaves the users' options quite open. As a result, it's possible to produce platform games in the style of *Manic Miner* or *Jet Set Willy*, action-oriented games like *Jetpac* and *Cybernoid*, or even top-view maze games along the lines of *Pac-Man*.

There are several tools available from the main menu for drawing background blocks, constructing screens from those blocks, designing sprite objects and placing them into the environment. There are others that tweak how the player's jump works if it's enabled, edit in-game sound effects and modify the colour palette for machines and emulators equipped with ULAplus support.

It's important to note that, although it makes creating action games significantly easier, *AGD* doesn't remove the programming from the process *entirely*, and there is a BASIC-like scripting language acting as the underpinning for things like player or enemy movement. The commands for this language are mostly self-explanatory, so SPRITEUP will move a sprite upwards, using CANGOUP beforehand will check if there's an obstruction to prevent movement and COLLISION will check to see if another sprite has bumped into it. And while the events editor provides some boilerplate scripts for the most common situations so games can be produced without having to enter too many commands, the package's real power comes from being able to tweak that supplied code to graft in extra features.

For complete beginners, we'd recommend keeping the documentation to hand, because it has a useful reference to scripting commands and the keyboard input for each section – there are variations between editors, selecting the next block is either the 'N' key when building blocks or '1' when creating a screen. It's also well



worth sitting down to watch the series of very helpful video tutorials produced by Paul Jenkinson, who has already been behind some excellent *AGD*-created titles including *Chopper Drop* and the two *Kyd Cadets*. These videos are for the previous version, but cover pretty much everything needed to get started, so point a web browser at www.kikstart.eu/agd-tutorials.

There are a few stability issues at the time of writing – we managed to knock things over a couple of times while building a simple *Cybernoid*-style game – but hopefully some of these will be fixed before this goes to print. In the meantime, saving work or dumping out emulator snapshots on a regular basis is highly advised.

Problems aside, *Arcade Game Designer 4* is free and more than capable of producing some great things as long as the user is willing to put some time and effort into working with it – having to back up frequently is a bit of a chore, but can be lived with.

90%

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk



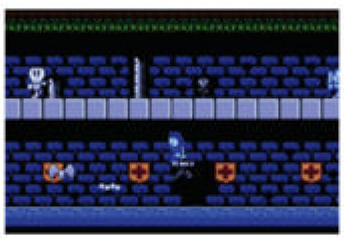
» [NES] No bombing, no heavy petting.

SIR ABADOL

» **FORMAT:** NINTENDO NES » **DEVELOPER:** THE MOJON TWINS
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/ABADOL-NES » **PRICE:** FREE

Sir Abadol is an 11th Century Mancunian crusader on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem – or he was until falling base over apex into a river and losing his mighty sword. The only way to recover this fabulous and essential piece of equipment seems to involve a trek through the countryside, avoiding ground and air-based nasties along the way and collecting wild abadol flowers. It's such a remarkable coincidence that these blooms just happen to share the brave knight's name!

This incarnation of the Mojon Twins' platform game has been given a NES makeover, so the graphics and sound have been revamped and the map organised into a series of horizontally scrolling areas. This does change the balance a little in the player's favour, because killed enemies are only respawned either on death or when leaving and returning to the current level. Apart from a couple of sections that were always a little tricky, collecting all the abadol flowers is a little easier this time around.



» [NES] Why can't he swim?

86%

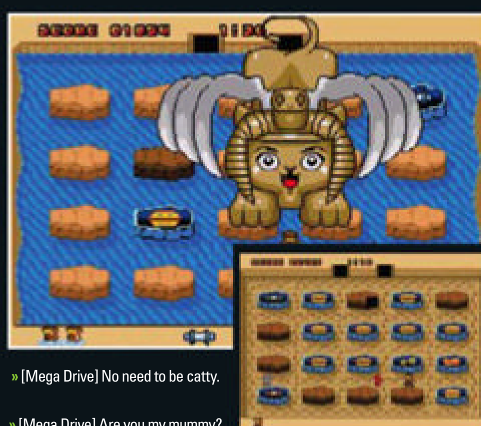
OH MUMMY

» **FORMAT:** SEGA MEGA DRIVE » **DEVELOPER:** 1985 ALTERNATIVO
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/MUMMY-MEGADRIVE » **PRICE:** FREE

Lance Colton and Eve Chou are in charge of a British Museum expedition to Egypt in order to explore some newly discovered pyramids and bring back as many artefacts as possible – assuming they survive an onslaught of mummies and other guardians left in place centuries ago by the Pharaohs. Not all of the tombs are in good condition, so the intrepid explorers will be wading through waist-high water or running around in pitch darkness where the only things visible to them are the eyes of whatever else is in the room.

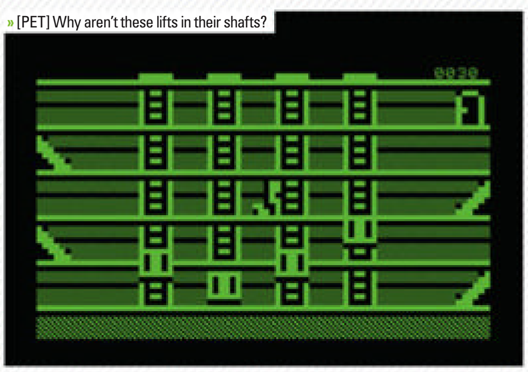
The gameplay is similar to coin-op classic *Amidar*, with Lance and Eve traipsing around tombs and leaving footprints as they go. Circling a sarcophagus will open it and reveal a treasure, with some required to complete the stage or battle a boss and others proving less helpful. These upgrades to the gameplay and the Mega Drive makeover work well, although we did feel that it could have done with a bit more variety in the levels themselves.

78%

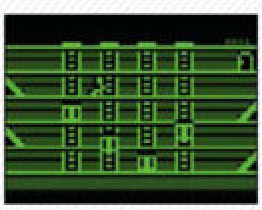


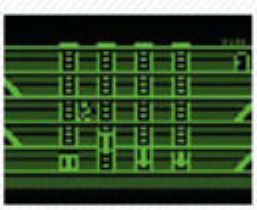
» [Mega Drive] No need to be catty.

» [Mega Drive] Are you my mummy?



» [PET] Why aren't these lifts in their shafts?





STAIRRUNNER

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE PET » **DEVELOPER:** REVIVAL GAMES
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/STAIRRUNNER-PET » **PRICE:** 3.99 EUROS (DOWNLOAD) OR 7.99 EUROS (CASSETTE)

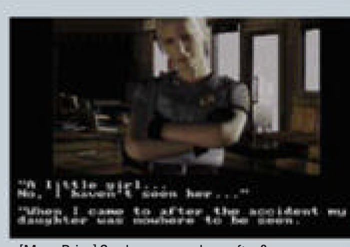
All over town the lifts in hotels, supermarkets and other large buildings have gone completely mad: and only one repairman can fix them. However, first he must get from the lobby to the top of each building by running across each of the five floors to reach an access stairwell. Crossing each landing means avoiding the out of control lifts and, once the repair man starts moving across a floor, he can't stop.

Stairrunner is presumably based on either *Elevator Repairman* for the Atari 8-bit or the more recent Atari 2600 homebrew *Elevators Amiss*. Despite this, along with varying the lift start positions between stages, both Atari games mix things up further by using different lift speeds and having an on-screen timer ticking away to keep things moving. With less variety between stages, *Stairrunner* is fun, but does prove repetitive in the long run and the unforgiving collisions can be frustrating.

67%

WHAT'S BREWING?

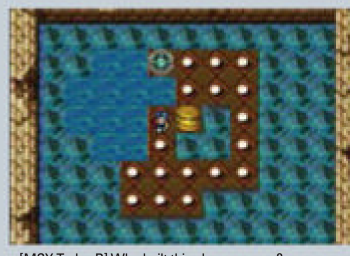
All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [Mega Drive] So, do you come here often?

» IT'S ALL GONE QUIET

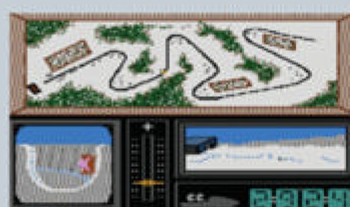
Silent Hill: Genesis is an interactive visual novel where the player follows the story and gets to influence things with their decisions. The animated scenes and sound effects of the original have pared down to static images and text descriptions but it still holds together reasonably well. There is a beta version to download and play at www.kikstart.eu/silent-hill-genesis.



» [MSX Turbo-R] Who built this place anyway?

» MILES FROM THE HOTEL

Available for the MSX Turbo-R on floppy or as a download, *Treasure Of Babylon* is a fiendish puzzle game where players must collect every gem on screen in order to use the exit portal. The levels are constructed from tiles that crumble to dust once stood upon, so getting around each area and back to the exit safely is challenging from the very beginning. Explore over at www.kikstart.eu/babylon-msx.



» [Atari 8-bit] Paging Bob Sled.

» WHERE THE TREETOPS GLISTEN

White Circus for the Atari 8-bit came out during the Eighties and, as a *Winter Games*-style title released on cassette, didn't fare well. The original developer has recently popped up on the Atari Age forums and, along with explaining the story behind the release in more detail, has uploaded his original disk version that has an extra ski jumping event removed from the commercial release. www.kikstart.eu/white-circus-a8.

HOMEBREW

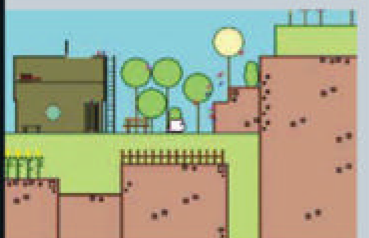
>> The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

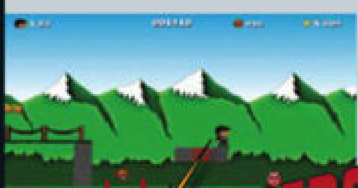
>> WE DARE YOU

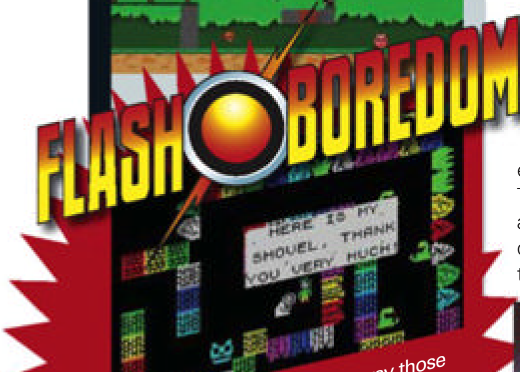
The theme for the 26th Ludum Dare game jam was minimalism, and there were a couple of *thousand* entries over a range of platforms. That's obviously far too many games to cover here, but a couple that caught our attention while browsing through the entries were *Gods Will Be Watching*, a point-and-click adventure with just one scene, a cute action platformer called *Mustache Armies* and *Title: Subtitle*, a *Mario*-style platformer which replaces graphics with words. With all those entries there should be something to suit everybody behind www.kikstart.eu/ludlum-dare-26.



>> GOING NUTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

In *Naoki Tales*, the titular character's girlfriend has been grabbed by something unpleasant, and so he's forced to go adventuring in order to rescue her. There are coins to collect and breakable blocks that disgorge power-ups. Naoki collects large nuts which can be thrown at the resident wildlife and what appear to be grumpy space hoppers. www.kikstart.eu/naoki-xblig.

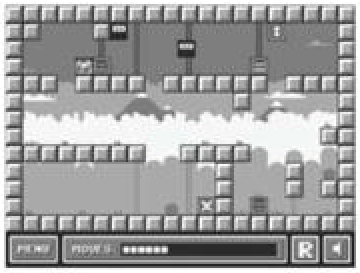




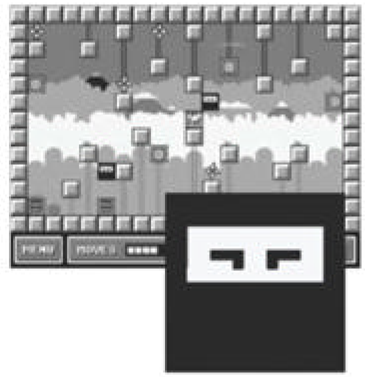
Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer's** Flash game of the month. This month we look at **Father Jonah Saves Da Day**.

THIS IS A SHORT, SPECTRUM-INSPIRED ACTION GAME THAT ATTEMPTS TO EMULATE ULTIMATE'S GRAPHICAL STYLE. THE TOWN IS UNDER ATTACK FROM AN EVIL SORCERESS'S MINIONS AND FATHER JONAH MUST BUY A SPADE, COLLECT KEYS AND GATHER THE COGS REQUIRED TO LOWER THE PORTCULLIS BEFORE THE REST OF HER FORCES ARRIVE. WWW.KIKSTART.EU/FATHER-JONAH-FLASH

MORE GAMES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING. . .







NINJA TWINS

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/NINJA-TWINS-INDIE

Ninjas love collecting treasure chests – or, at least, the extremely blocky Ninja Twins have a penchant for bling, and so their only purpose in life is to grab the booty on each level. Both characters move independently but follow the same commands, so selecting a direction sets both off and they'll keep moving until something gets in their way. If that something happens to be a deadly ninja star or their twin, the game will be over. The same fate awaits the player should their limited number of moves be used up.

Along with a couple of static background blocks and the lethal stars, there are also moveable blocks which can be pushed around and others which are damaged and can be smashed. There are teleportation devices which beam the ninjas or any moveable boxes that happen to be pushed into them and trampoline-like bouncy blocks which send incoming ninjas back in the direction they came from. All of these elements will need to be interacted with in order to complete the stage.

The challenges can be attempted as often as required in order to complete them and, once defeated, can be skipped when the next session with the game is started. Players can pause to plan strategies in advance due to there being no time limit to worry about on each stage. *Ninja Twins* is a significant and thought-provoking challenge from the start.

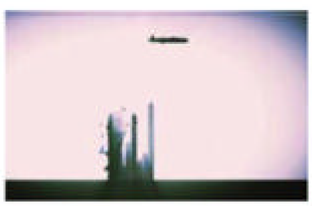
THE BLITZ

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/BLITZ-XBLIG

There's a war on, so man the armoury of a descending plane and destroy the city below by dropping building-smashing bombs. However, the bomb release is actually under player control, and so the game boils down to waiting until the right moment and stabbing the A button to release the deadly cargo.

This is an okay rendition of VIC-20 classic *Blitz*, although the slow pace of the plane and small cities on earlier stages mean it takes a while to get going. Despite being called *The Blitz* and using a silhouette of a Lancaster bomber, the developer has set the game nearly two decades before either happened, using Twenties styling and a jazz soundtrack that doesn't really fit the action.



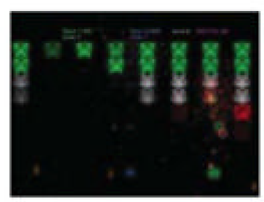




WARPED RETRO

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/WARPED-RETRO-XBLIG

***Warped Retro* is** a collection of three classic coin-op games: *Rocks* is a rendition of *Asteroids*, *Fortress* takes its cues from *Star Castle* and *Invaders* is a vectorised version of *Space Invaders*. All of these are reasonable renditions of the originals, but what really makes this package stand out is the titular Warped mode, which throws elements of all three games at the player simultaneously.



So, the Star Castle sits on the left of the screen, Space Invaders attack down the right and asteroids roam the entire play area, with the stage being over after all three are destroyed. We found a bug – keep out of the Invaders' space when clearing a stage – but that can be played around with, and this is a fun bit of faux-vector blasting.

HOMEBREW HEROES

BACK IN ISSUE 106 WE HAD A LOOK AT LOST DISKS OF SAM ON THE SAM COUPÉ AND LIKED IT. NOW, DEVELOPERS BLACK JET HAVE GIVEN ITS HERO ANOTHER OUTING, THIS TIME FOR THE AMIGA AND UNDER THE NAME MOEBIUS GOATLIZARD. ALONG WITH THE REVIEW OF THE GAME ITSELF LAST ISSUE, WE HAD ANOTHER CHAT WITH DEVELOPER ANDREW GILLEN ABOUT COLLECTING PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES



Q&A

As a developer, how does the Amiga compare to other platforms you've worked on?
Considerably more capable, yet also more complex. Learning the machine code was fun, the 68000 has loads of excellent addressing modes and registers. Using them with gay abandon was just fun and liberating.

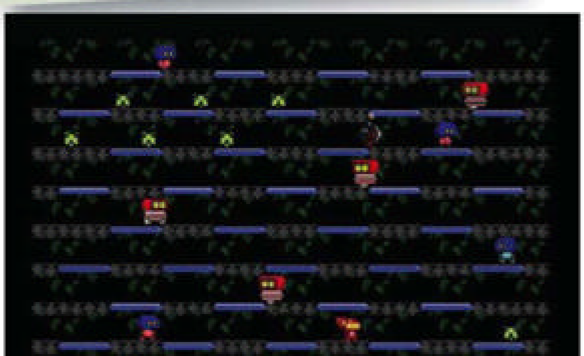
How difficult was getting *Moebius Goatlizard* going on that hardware?
It wasn't difficult per se, but at times it was a tough learning experience. Although I've had Amigas since my A500 I've never actually programmed for it. I chose this as a first project because I felt it wouldn't stretch the architecture or my own abilities. Once I figured out the custom chips, the problem was deciding how to make best use of all that power.

What enhancements were made to the game in comparison to Moebius's previous outings?
Lots of graphical enhancements, such as more colours on screen – the SAM had 16, with the copper this one has up to about 80. Everything benefited from this lick of paint upgrade – backgrounds, platform graphics, title screen, etc. The Amiga hardware made screen wobble effects a doddle for the bomb explosions. That is probably my favourite feature! The extra memory and sample-based sound hardware let me have more sounds with less processing overhead.

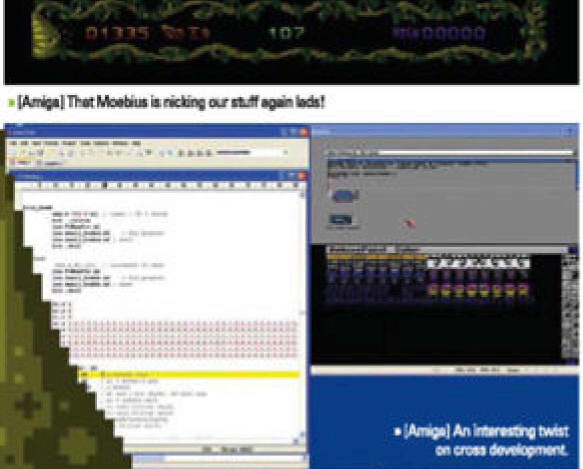
Why isn't there any title music present on the original 68000-based machines?
Jaco wanted a suitably retro tune to capture the 8-bit roots of the game, and that meant using a chip tune-style tracker. Unfortunately, we discovered on a 68000 Amiga it took about 30 seconds to start up each time, which seemed too long, so we took the decision to only load in if using a more powerful Amiga.

Were there any particularly great or painful moments during development?
I did a lot of programming and testing on machines with 68020+ processors and later discovered it crashed in lots of different places when played on anything running a 68000 due to addressing limitations. That was frustrating and shows my lack of experience. I think I rushed to finish the game in the end, and the attribute snake present on Dave's original Speccy game didn't make the cut. I regret that particularly, but I was really pleased with the new walking bomb we put in.

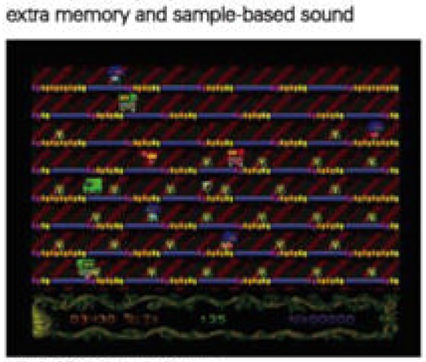
And finally, what can we expect to see next from Black Jet?
We have an Amiga shoot-'em-up in the works, very early stages though. We're planning to make it for the AGA Chipset this time. I've also been tinkering with scrolling on the SAM and have a few game ideas I'd like to try out with it.



» [Amiga] That Moebius is nicking our stuff again lads!



» [Amiga] An interesting twist on cross development.



» [Amiga] Get in the back of the van.



» [Amiga] I like what you've done with the place.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**



STAR LETTER



DOCUMENTING THE FUTURE

Dear Retro Gamer,
The other day I had an argument with my wife. It wasn't about money, or even the kids – it was an argument about where I could store my 117 issues of **Retro Gamer**. Even though I neatly keep them in binders, they are beginning to take up a large amount of space and so my frustrated wife dumped them in our recycling bin. I dug them out once I got home from work and proceeded to ask her why she did such a callous thing to my collection. "They're just magazines," was her dismissive reply.

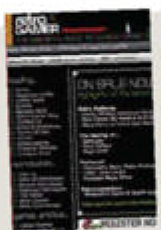
We then went into the argument I mentioned earlier, but later that evening I began to reflect on what she said. Looking at most of the magazines my wife reads, it's clear where she got her assumption. Most are throwaway, designed to sell you the latest fashions, or for you to swoon over the latest beefcake. In short, there is no reason to return to them once read.

For me, **Retro Gamer** is different, and in many ways shouldn't even be viewed as a magazine. I see it as a genuine document of gaming history, and as we move into a digital age and older developers die, I'm concerned that we're going to lose more of our unique gaming heritage. **Retro Gamer** isn't perfect – no magazine is – but when it comes to preserving our industry's heritage I can't think of any magazine that does a better job. Keep up the fantastic work.
Peter Staddon

Peter believes that every issue of Retro Gamer should be cherished. We're inclined to agree with him…

WIN!

Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our latest eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 3**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words, or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…



From the forum

» www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

What's your favourite NES game?

mrspud
I hate them all. Go, Go SMS!

samhain81
Faxanadu – This game stays close to my heart always. Personally blows the 8-bit *Zelda* games out of the water. The music, the atmosphere, the AI and NPC interaction really made you feel like you were part of something big. The best action RPG of the 8-bit era.

AmigaJay
Indy Heat. The graphics are crap but gameplay is still good!

Hitman_HalStep
I was never a big fan of the NES and didn't get to play that many games but, as a curveball, the game I remember most fondly is *Gremlins 2: The New Batch*. A fun shooter/platformer that I found very challenging but a lot of fun.

craigritchie
DuckTales was one of the best! But the ultimate was *Super Mario Bros 3*, for sure – the pirated cart we had on sale in South Africa allowed you to cheat to get the whistle and access any world any time!

ncf1
Nothing came close to the *Super Mario Bros* series in my opinion.

The Laird
Double Dragon II – it's the only game on the NES that actually manages to be better than the arcade original.

The Hardest Of All Freds
Star Wars – for it is the only one I ever played on the original hardware. Doesn't make it any less good, mind.

Gibberish Driftwood
Ice Climber is my fave.

look at it sideways
You're going to get a lot of this, and with good reason: *Super Mario Bros 3*. It's not aged one bit – it still plays as perfectly as it ever did. Just brilliant.

Hiro
The only one I've played a bit is *Rad Racer*, a very average racer. I know this will mark me as a Nintendo hater, but every time I see a NES in action I feel very lucky to have been a C64 owner at the time.



UNLOVED? DON'T BE SILLY

Dear **Retro Gamer** ,
I was delighted to see the Sega Master System in your latest issue, but I was shocked at the poor choice of words you used to describe the article. The Master System was never an unloved system, and to suggest anything otherwise does a great disservice to Sega's 8-bit console. I feel that the word was used for no other reason than to increase sales, and I think it's a shame that **Retro Gamer** has to use these sorts of headlines to trap readers. It was, admittedly, a very good piece and extremely well researched, but everyone knows that Sega's machine was massive in Europe, so quite why you're suggesting it wasn't I'll never know.
Matthew James

Sorry to hear you weren't keen on the use of 'unloved' Dean. We would of course argue that, although it clearly wasn't unloved by those who owned it (Darran loves the machine), that viewpoint wasn't shared by the world's gaming community. The Master System barely made a dent in America and Japan, and as Retro Gamer now enjoys a worldwide audience we wanted a cover line to reflect that.

THE RETRO BOX

Dear **Retro Gamer,**
Now that Microsoft has revealed that the Xbox One will be released this November, can we please, please, please have an article about the original console?

Not only is Microsoft's first console now 12 years old, there is also a generation gap of two machines. Surely this makes it perfect fodder for your magazine?

I would love to see an article about the machine's history, its subsequent reception among the gaming community (I remember everyone wanting Microsoft to fail) and the legacy it has left behind. I'd also love to see an article on its greatest games and the many titles that fell by the wayside, as well as a 'making of' with Bungie about the brilliant *Halo*. If you could get this to coincide with the Xbox One's launch I would be absolutely ecstatic.

Kindest regards,
Steven Perry



» [Xbox] Is it only Steven that wants a making of *Halo: Combat Evolved*? Write in and let us know.

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

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» [PC] Will Darran ever get around to writing an article about *Dungeons & Dragons*? You'll just have to wait and see.

Thanks for your letter Steven. While you're right that the Xbox does indeed tick all our required retro boxes, it still feels a little too new at the moment. We may do the odd two-page spread every now and then, but we're unlikely to do anything too extravagant, as our focus is mainly on 8-bit and 16-bit games. We'll certainly take your request into consideration however.

FEEL THE RHYTHM

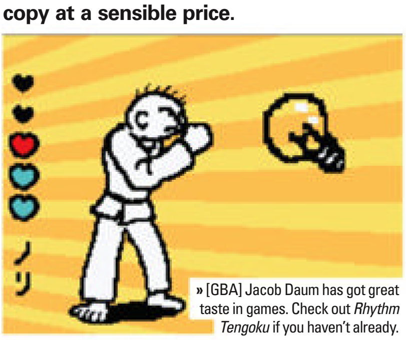
Dear **Retro Gamer** staff,

I would like to suggest a game for your 'Future Classics' article: *Rhythm Tengoku*. You mentioned this game back in Issue 93, and this helped me actually get the game some time later. It's an amazing piece of work, can be played endlessly, and has many different mini-games to play with. The public should hear about this game (if they haven't already) and all the little joys that come with it.

Sincerely (and very kindly) yours,

Jacob Daum

That's a really good shout Jacob. *Rhythm Tengoku* is a great little game and worthy of a mention in the mag. We will get on it as soon as we can buy a copy at a sensible price.



» [GBA] Jacob Daum has got great taste in games. Check out *Rhythm Tengoku* if you haven't already.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Stephen Holmes

This month we're introducing our new sub editor, who was at uni with our designer Jon. Steve's already mastered the tricky task of making Darran's tea just right, and earned additional brownie points for introducing us to *Chivalry: Medieval Warfare*. He then lost all those points by going online and decapitating Darran at every opportunity.

DUNGEONS AND COMPUTERS

Dear Darran,

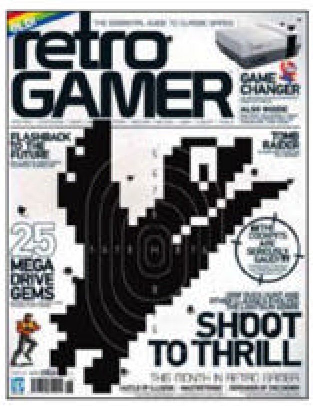
About two years ago you mentioned that a *Dungeons & Dragons* article would be appearing in the magazine. It's now 24 months later and I've still yet to see this article and am itching to read it. I absolutely adored playing the RPG versions of *Dungeons & Dragons*, so the idea of seeing screenshots on every game ever made was making me highly excited. Unfortunately it never arrived, and I'm starting to believe that we'll never see this article appear. I know that you are a big fan of the game like me, so please could you find the time to put this article together. I'm sure classic developers like Chris Avellone would love to be included in it, and I'd love to hear your thoughts on many of the games as a lot of them are truly atrocious. Please don't leave me waiting for another two years – I don't think I could bear it.

Richard Pearce

Sorry about the *D&D* feature Nick. We'll try and sort something out because you're not the first person to have mentioned its omission now. As for developers like Chris Avellone, that sounds like a great idea. Leave it with us and we'll try and sort something.

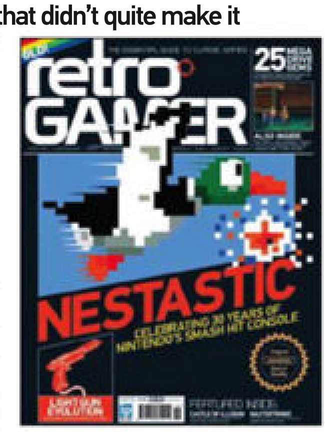
THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY. . .

Darran discusses the covers that didn't quite make it



LIGHTGUN COVER

One of the things that we've been trying to push on **Retro Gamer** is an emphasis on far more inventive covers. I absolutely loved the idea of this *Duck Hunt* cover, as it was a nice take on an idea our designer Jon had seen a few months previously. No matter how much we tweaked it though, it just didn't really look like a **Retro Gamer** cover and so we eventually dropped it.



NES CELEBRATION

I felt we were being pretty clever with this one. Not only was it a cracking adaptation of an old Nintendo game box, but it also allowed us to include a clever hit for our lightgun feature as well. Ultimately though, we'd just done a hardware feature on the cover of Issue 117, and felt that *Flashback* would be a little more appropriate due to the new game coming out shortly.

retro GAMER

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Dracula unleashed

In a world exclusive interview, Masahiro Ueno explains how he turned Super Castlevania IV into a SNES smash hit

Atari Jaguar

■ As Atari's console turns 20, we explain why you may want to reconsider your opinion of the 64-bit system

Q*bert

■ Warren Davis looks back at the creation of his iconic arcade mascot and how he's continuing to inspire gamers some 30 years later

Puzzle games

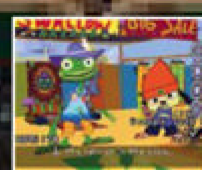
■ Alexey Pajitnov and other key developers explain how the puzzle genre has continued to evolve with each new generation of systems

Also inside...

- Powering up the Spectrum 128K • Zeppelin Games
- Parappa The Rapper • Deactivators • Sandy White
- Counterstrike • Cannon Fodder • And much, much more








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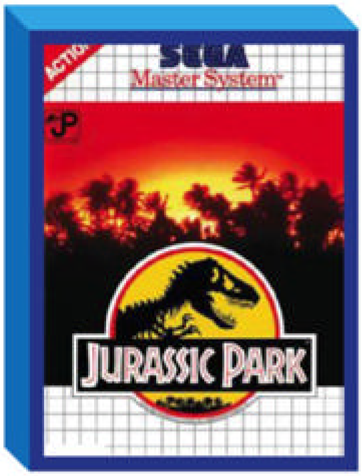

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ENDGAME

JURASSIC PARK



» We all remember how Jurassic Park ended, right? The deaths and danger caused by a security breach, courtesy of that guy who looks like that guy from Seinfeld, convinced everyone who survived the ordeal that opening such an attraction would be unwise. Well, that's not quite how the Master System tells it. Let's take a look at Sega's alternative ending to the box office smash



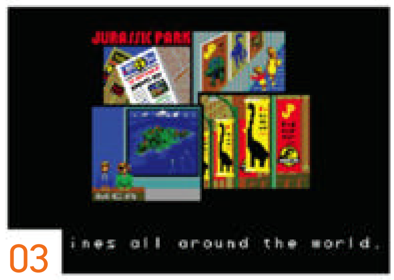
01

» Dr Grant eventually reaches the Visitor Centre. However, rather than end on a battle with two velociraptors, Sega decides that a much better way to end its alternative telling of the story is with a big purple dinosaur named Barney.



02

» It turns out that Grant's plight hasn't merely been for survival, but also to reactivate the park's security system. After getting JP back online and clearing away all the masticated dead bodies, it is deemed safe for opening.



03

» The carnivorous man-made attractions are considered amazing spectacles and gain global attention. Jurassic Park is everywhere, on the news, in the newspapers, even on the West End. We think there's even a movie about it.



04

» Very soon though, people get bored of dinosaurs and start taking them for granted. Some people even mock them, calling them hurtful things like 'stupid' and 'pea brained' for getting extinct in the first place. It really is quite sad.



05

» With dinosaurs yesterday's news, various entrepreneurs start trying to hit upon the next big extinction craze to profit from. Weirdly, all of these are tied to office items. Jurassic Park is joined by Fax Machine Mecca, Pager Park and Rolodex Ranch.



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